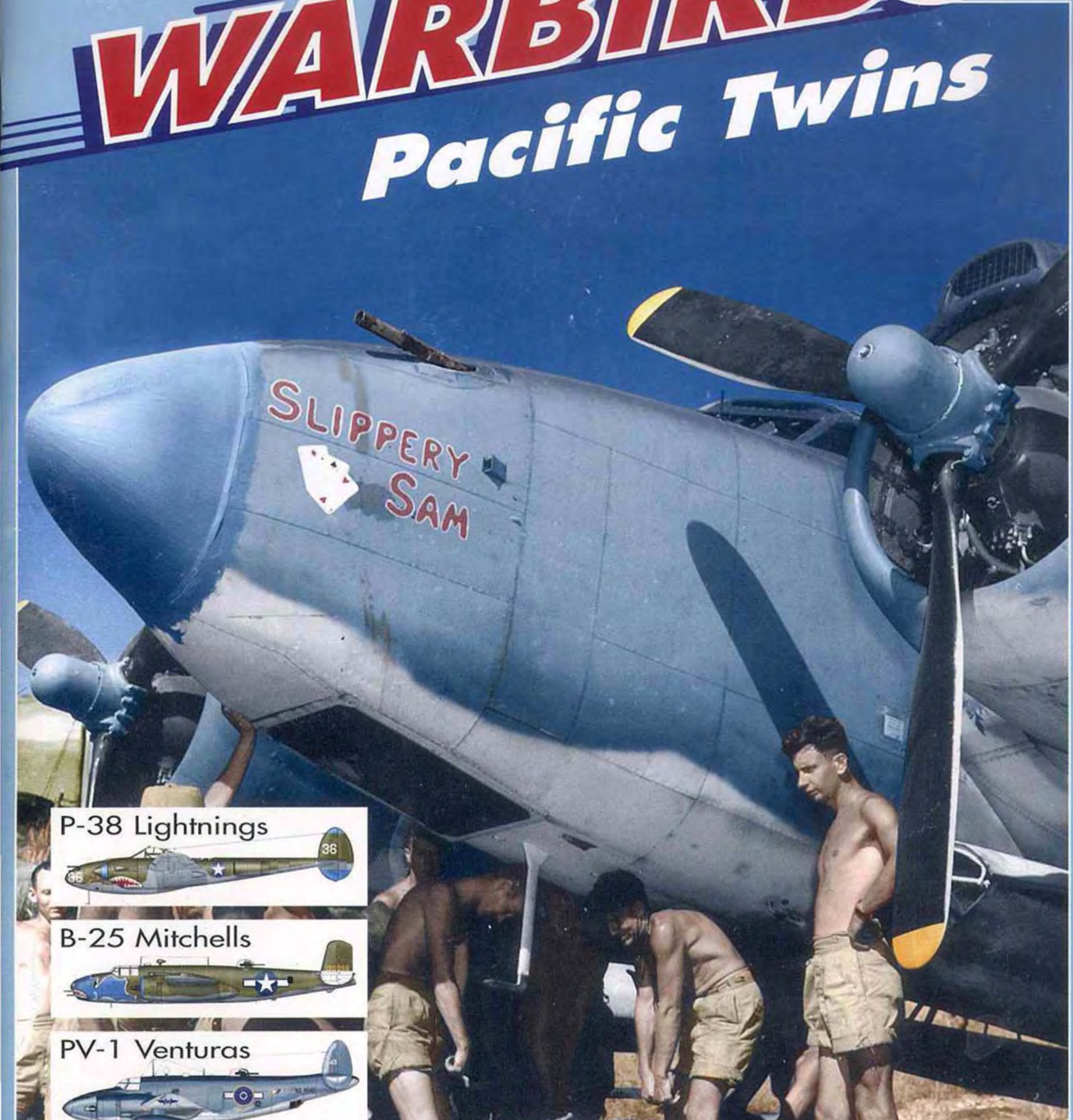
Ventura
PUBLICATIONS

CLASSIC WARBIRDS

Pacific Twins


SLIPPERY SAM
P-38 Lightnings
B-25 Mitchells
PV-1 Venturas

Classic Warbirds No.8

CLASSIC WARBIRDS

No. 8

– Pacific Twins –

NOTRE DAME
DE VICTOIRE

Major John P. 'Jock' Henebry, second from the right, flanked by two officers and two ground crew members on the left. His B-25C, *Notre Dame de Victoire,* was lost on 'Bloody Tuesday', although all onboard survived. (via Aero Journal)

No. 8 in the Classic Warbirds series

INTRODUCTION

The B-25 Mitchell, PV-1 Ventura and P-38 Lightning were three of the great 'Twins' of the Pacific War...

In July 1942 the Allies decided to make the defeat of Germany their primary objective. The American Joint Chiefs of Staff however, still assigned great importance to driving the Japanese out of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; the first step being the isolation of the major Japanese base at Rabaul, on the island of New Britain.

This issue in the Classic Warbirds series covers the operation of the Fifth Air Force B-25s and P-38s in the battle against the Japanese stronghold of Rabaul, in particular the famous raid on 'Bloody Tuesday', 2 November 1943. Extensive photographic coverage has been assembled and the colour schemes of the aircraft involved in the November 1943 raids are well covered.

The PV-1 Ventura was the US Navy equivalent of the US Air Forces B-25. One hundred and thirty-nine Venturas were supplied to the Royal New Zealand Air Force under lend-lease arrangements in 1943/44. They participated in the Solomons campaign alongside their American counterparts and contributed to the defeat of Japan in the Pacific Islands.

The RNZAF Venturas were a colourful breed, wearing US Navy camouflage and various repaint schemes along with intricate 'nose art', including many Disney cartoons applied at the Lockheed Vega factory in California.

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BLOODY TUESDAY – 2 NOVEMBER 1943

The military installations of Rabaul were captured in less than a day by the Japanese, on 23 January 1942. They consisted of a deep-water port and two operational airfields making them a prize of considerable strategic importance.

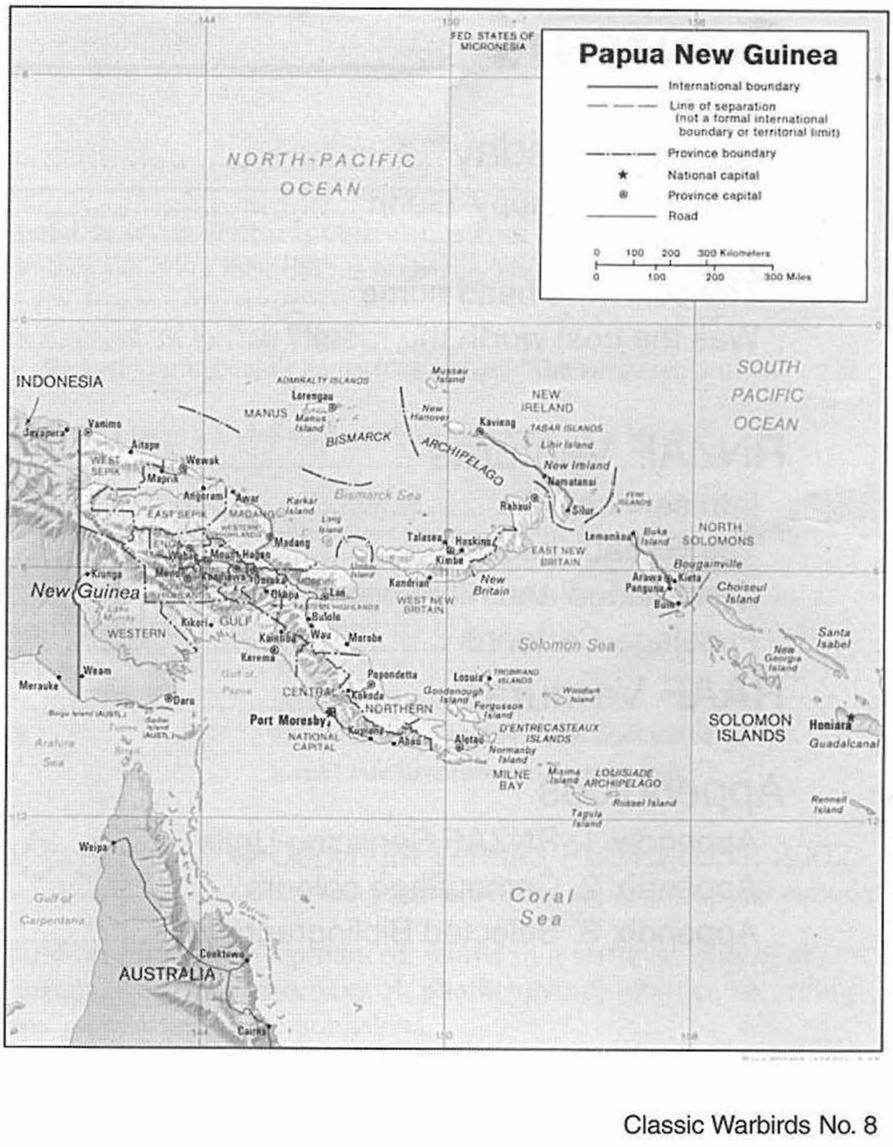
Tokyo prepared it's newly-conquered Pacific territories for a decisive naval encounter with the American fleet. However, they underestimated the strength and resolve of the American and allied forces in the Southwestern Pacific. The Japanese viewed Rabaul as the key to their defence system and it was also set up as a transport hub for sea and air traffic proceeding onwards to New Guinea and the Solomons. It was reinforced with a considerable number of combat aircraft and naval vessels, so much so, that by the summer of 1943 the American commanders were well aware that Rabaul was a major thorn in their side.

AIR POWER AND RABAUL

Quadrant, the Allies conference that began in Canada on 14 August 1943, reached a number of decisions regarding the war in the Pacific but, in doing so, threw into sharp relief the power struggle between the US Army's larger-than-life General MacArthur and the Navy's autocratic supreme commander, Admiral King. *Quadrant's* decision to neutralise rather than recapture Rabaul, left MacArthur feeling cheated by what he viewed as Admiral King thwarting his plan for defeating the Japanese – and making good on his much publicised promise, 'I shall return'. MacArthur's plan was to drive southwest with the aim of landing at Mindanao in the Philippines. The key to achieving this was the capture of Rabaul – a vital jumping off point.

The US Navy was not keen to hand over one of its Task Force Groups to aid MacArthur's dream of aggrandisement, preferring to lend its support to a thrust into the central Pacific. This move was supported by Air Force General Arnold because Admiral King was the only man who could deliver the island of Saipan, which Arnold badly needed as a base for his B-29s.

The *Quadrant* conference backed King, as the actual capture of Rabaul could not have been achieved without heavy casualties. The surrounding area, covered by impenetrable jungle, with the only access by direct assault on the port itself, which nestled against a volcanic backdrop - ideal terrain for a stubborn defence. MacArthur, obliged to yield,


Papua New Guinea
International boundary
Line of separation (not a formal international boundary or territorial limit)
Province boundary
National capital
Province capital
Road
0 100 200 300 Kilometers
0 100 200 300 Miles
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
FED. STATES OF MICRONESIA
INDONESIA
BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO
MANUS
NEW IRELAND
Rabaul
Kavieng
EAST NEW BRITAIN
WEST NEW BRITAIN
New Britain
Bismarck Sea
NORTH SOLOMONS
Bougainville
New Guinea
Solomon Sea
SOLOMON ISLANDS
Honiara
Guadalcanal
Port Moresby
Coral Sea
AUSTRALIA
Gulf of Carpentaria
Arafura Sea
Wewak
Madang
Lae
Jayapura
Vanimo
Aitape
Daru
Weipa
Cooktown
Cairns

A modern map of the Southwest Pacific.

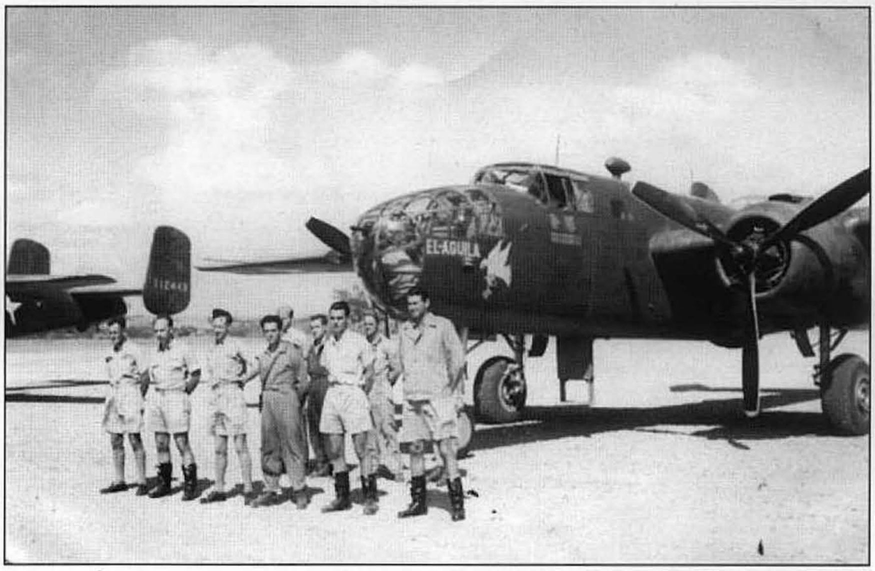
sought out Air Force General Kenney who saw a golden opportunity to demonstrate the supremacy of air power, as a war-winning weapon. Kenny agreed to use his squadrons to eliminate the threat from this Japanese-held strong point.

ORGANISING THE 5TH AIR FORCE

By September 1943 the US 5th AF had shed the ramshackle image it had when General Kenney took command, just over a year earlier. The 5th AF could now field 102 squadrons including 43 RAAF squadrons which had been placed under the unified command structure set up by the USAAF.

Among the units at Kenney's disposal were:

- 3rd BG (B-25), Dobodura,
- 38th BG (B-25), Port Moresby,
- 345th BG (B-25), Port Moresby,
- 9th FS/49th FG (P-38), Dobodura,
- 39th FS/35th FG (P-38), Port Moresby,
- 80th FS/8th FG (P-38), Port Moresby,
- 475th FG (P-38) comprising the 431st, 432nd, 433rd Fighter Squadrons, Dobodura.



B-25 'El Aguila' (Eagle in Spanish) of the 13th BS, 3rd BG on 30 September 1942, at Charters Towers before their B-25s were fitted with extra nose guns. On the right is Colonel John H. 'Jim' Davies who later became 3rd BG Commander.*

The tail in the background belongs to a B-25 later fitted with a gun-nose and named *Mortimer.* (M. Claringbould)

MAJOR PAUL 'PAPPY' GUNN

The first B-25s to arrive were field-modified under the supervision of Major Paul 'Pappy' Gunn, but most were modified with North American approval by the 4th Air Depot at Townsville, Queensland, Australia . The majority of SWPA veterans agree that Gunn was the principal architect of the Allied victory in Papua New Guinea thanks to the initial transformation he wrought on the A-20A medium bomber, known as the Boston in the RAAF and the Havoc in the USAAF. They had arrived armed with just four 7.62mm (.30 cal) machine guns and had a poor range, which made the crossing of the Owen Stanley Range particularly hazardous.

'Pappy' Gunn ordered the installation of four additional 12.7mm (.50 cal) machine guns and two extra 1,700 litre fuel tanks which gave the A-20 a dramatic increase in fire-power and endurance.

When the first B-25Cs reached the 90th BS, they were given the same treatment by 'Pappy' Gunn and North American engineer Jack Fox. The ventral turret and rear tail-gun position were eliminated and the glazed Plexiglas** panels in the aircraft's nose were either replaced by sheet metal or painted over. The coverings were non-structural. Four 12.7mm (.50 cal) machine guns were mounted in external fairings – two on each side of the forward fuselage. This meant the B-25 was now equipped with no less than ten .50 cal forward firing guns, including the two .50 cal mg's in the upper turret.

For low altitude operations the B-25 was fitted with racks able to carry up to 60 light fragmentation bombs and 6 x 50kg 'iron' bombs. The bombardier, whose function had been eliminated, was replaced by a co-pilot. Flight and firing tests conducted in December 1942 gave encouraging results. The modified B-25Cs proved slightly slower, but more manoeuvrable than the A-20s which made little difference on strafing at less than 50 metres (165ft) altitude. On the plus side, the modified B-25C had a greater range, larger internal capacity and more devastating fire-power.

The USAAF 4th Air Depot at Townsville then modified a batch of B-25Cs, and by April 1943 thirty ground-strafing aircraft were delivered to 5th AF units.

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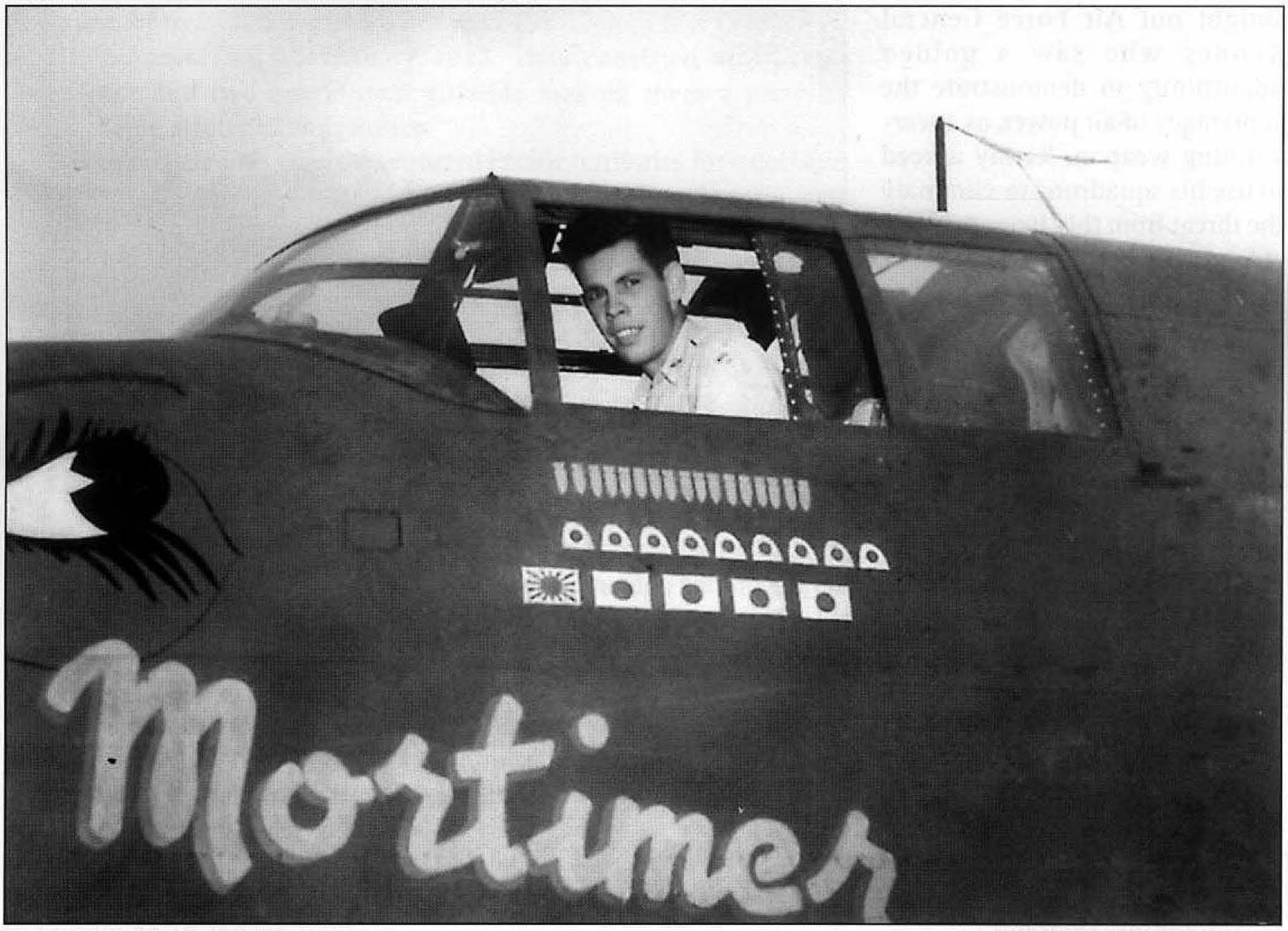
* P. Dunn.

** The name Plexiglas is registered to Rohm & Haas; essentially the US counterpart to Perspex, though a different material.



One of the first B-25Cs modified in Australia to have a Gunship nose was 41-12443, *Mortimer*. On these early conversions the perspex nose panels were simply painted over.

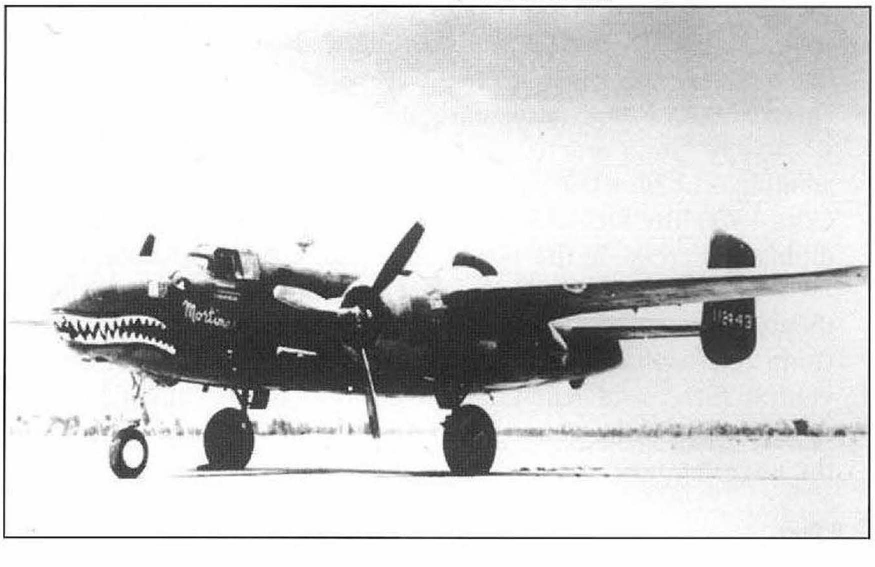
Mortimer took part in the 2 November 1943 raid with the 3rd Bomb Group. (Aero Journal)

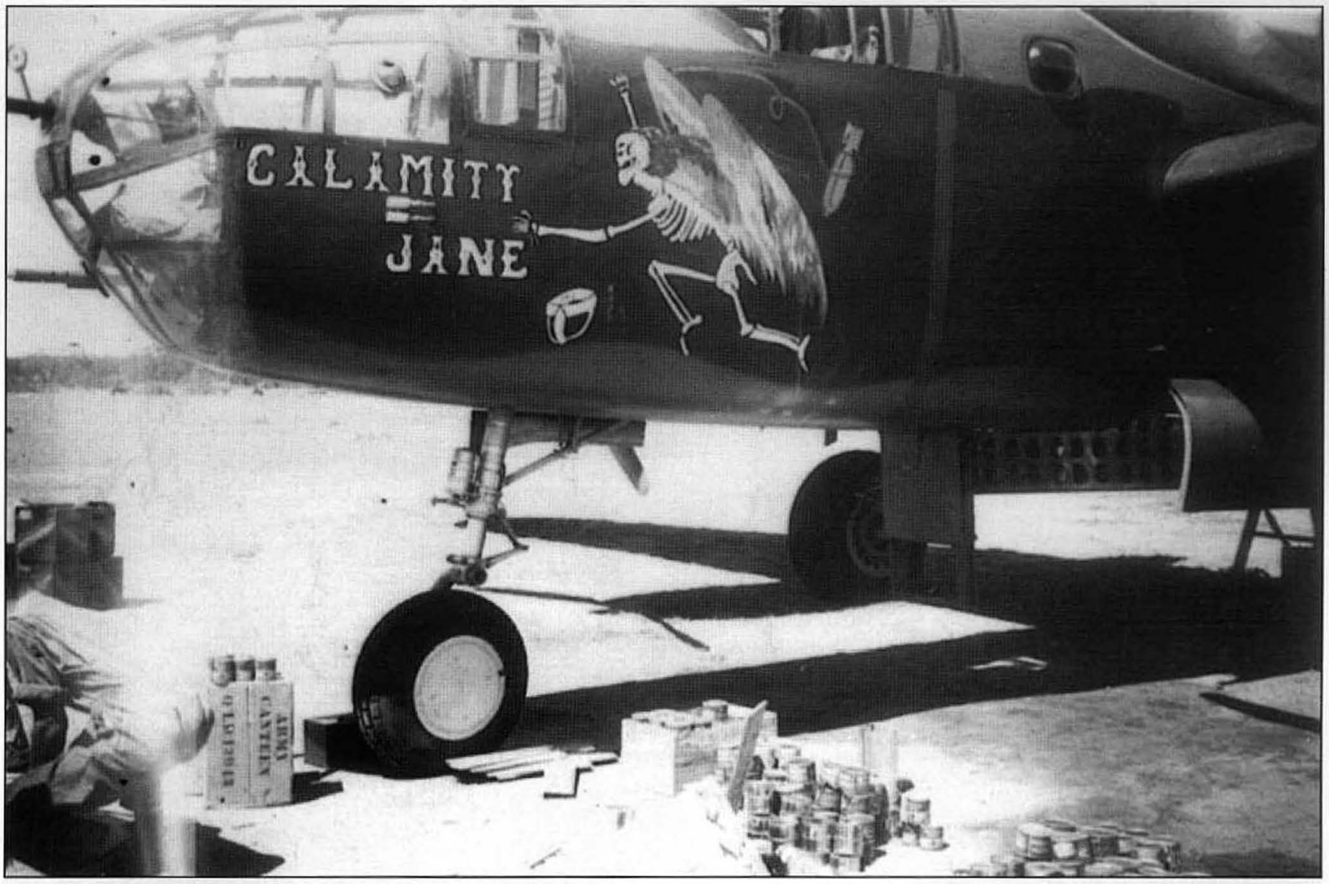
JAPANS OPERATION 'RO-GO'

When the 5th AF signed up for MacArthur's campaign against Rabaul, Port Moresby was no longer considered as a front-line base. Most of the missions were launched from Dobodura on the east coast of Papua New Guinea while the RAAF was completing the construction of two landing strips on Kiriwina Island, to act as refuelling points for the American P-38s. Rabaul was not a new target for Kenney's crews either, the first combat missions having been flown on 25 January, 1942. Since that date activities at Rabaul had been constantly monitored by F-4 and F-5As of the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. With the prospect of good weather, a meeting of the joint military staff of SWPAC held at Brisbane decided to launch the air assault against Rabaul in the second week of October. The mission given to the 5th AF was the destruction of naval and civilian vessels and all Japanese aircraft stationed on the adjoining airfields.

This air campaign was designed to prepare the way for a seaborne invasion directed by Admiral Halsey from Bougainville and by General MacArthur from Cape Gloucester, New Guinea.

A port side view of *Mortimer*. (Aero Journal)





A photo-reconnaissance mission carried out over Rabaul by the 8th Photo Squadron revealed the presence of a heavy cruiser, a light cruiser, ten destroyers, five submarines and twenty-six cargo vessels at Simpson Harbour. USAAF Intelligence Services also produced a tally of 87 medium bombers and 59 fighters on the two neighbouring air bases. By 11 October 1943, the number of Japanese fighter planes stationed in the area had risen to 145. This was due to Japanese preparations for Operation RO-GO which had been planned to aid their ground troops forced onto the defensive in Papua-New Guinea. The 12th of October 1943 was the launch date of RO-GO, which was to consist of a series of air attacks against Allied positions facing the weakest points in the Japanese front line. Based on intercepts of secret 'Ultra' messages, the Americans were able to launch a massive pre-emptive strike on ground targets in New-Britain which wrecked Japanese hopes of reversing the situation. The Japanese lookout system was taken by surprise and their forces routed.

This was not the only set back for the Japanese. At the end of October Allied forces stormed ashore at Choiseul, and on the 1st of November at Bougainville. Judging this threat to be of immense strategic importance, the Imperial Navy flew the maximum possible additional combat aircraft components – a total of 72 A6M3 Zeros – into Rabaul. This move drew the following observation from Masatake Okumiya, a member of the 2nd Aircraft Carrier HQ staff.*

> "Personally, I did not approve of sending our deck-landing fighters to reinforce Rabaul. These units were trained for decisive air-sea engagements, not for a prolonged campaign against a land-based air force... It was a completely wasteful move with no possible benefit to Japan."

B-25D 41-12962 *Calamity Jane* of the 13th BS, 3rd Attack Group (later changed to Bomb Group).

Calamity Jane carried macabre nose-art and was named by her pilot, Robert Price, after his wife Jane. First assigned to the 13th BS, she carried out many missions over New Guinea before being converted to a strafer. Reassigned to the 90th BS, 41-12962 became 3rd Group Commander 'Jock' Henebry's first personal B-25. He renamed her *M & M*.

On 23rd July 1943 during an attack on a beached Japanese barge at Hanish Harbour, New Guinea, her pilot that day, Captain Oscar L. Wertz, pulled up too late and his starboard engine clipped the barge. The engine broke off and *M & M* careered into jungle and disintegrated. The wreckage still lies there today. Other crew lost were: Co-pilot, 2/Lt Glenn H. Maddox; 2/Lt Charles J. Houser; S/Sgt Jack R. Keith; and S/Sgt Walter J Kennedy Jnr.

In this photo Calamity Jane is seen at Schwimmer airfield, Port Moresby, just after having flown up from Australia with canned foodstuffs.

(M. Claringbould)

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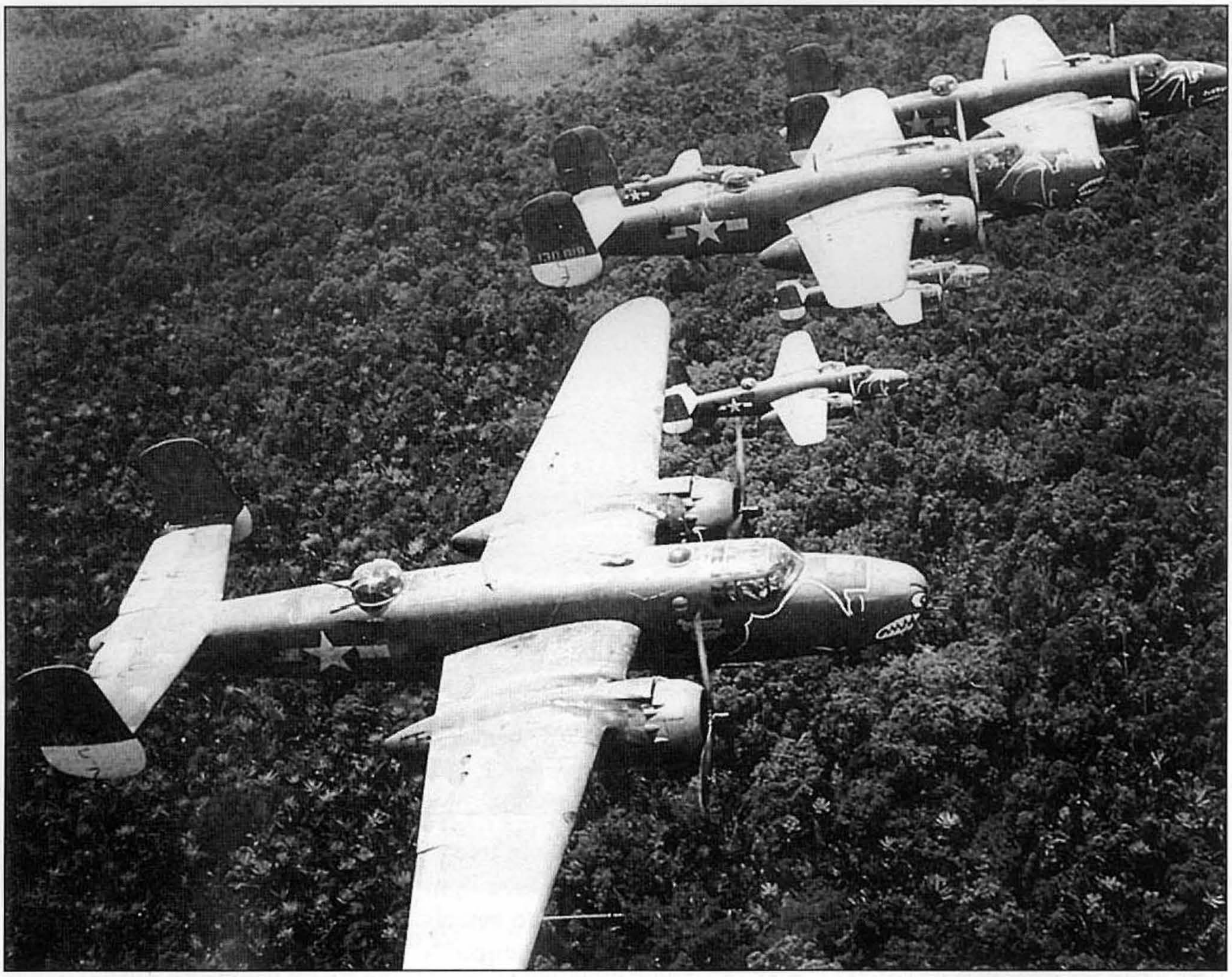
* Okumiya, Horikoshi,



Six B-25s of the 499th BS, 345th BG, fly low over the Papuan jungle in December 1943. In the foreground is B-25D-5, 41-30058 *Lucky Bat.*

For the 2 November raid the Groups B-25Cs were loaded with either light para-fragmentation bombs, each one producing several explosions which had proved particularly effective against flak positions or, 50 kg phosphorous bombs. Christened 'Kenney's Cocktails', these produced clouds of dense white smoke which, it was hoped, would blind the flak gunners, allowing the following waves of B-25s to attack with impunity. (J. C. Hanna, via L. J. Hickey)

These new arrivals swelled the number of Imperial Navy aircraft stationed at Rabaul. The carrier units (Kôkûtai) already onshore were; No. 201, 204 (including a detachment from 281), 251 and 253, all equipped with Mitsubishi A6M3 Zeros. No. 251 was also equipped with some J1N1-S nightfighters.

The Japanese Imperial Army had moved out of Rabaul to defend New Guinea but left behind several Ki.43 Oscars from 78 and 248 Sentai, plus some Ki.61 Tonys of 68 and 78 Sentai and the Ki.45 Nick twin -engine fighters of 13 Sentai. All these groups were stationed on forward airfields at Wakde and Wewak, with Rabaul serving as their rear support base. The port and town of Rabaul held stocks of food, ammunition and fuel for the occupying Japanese forces and was defended by 367 anti-aircraft guns. The majority of these were placed around Simpson Harbour where the curtain of hills overlooking the anchorage offered excellent warning of an impending air raid.

THE MISSION – 2ND NOVEMBER 1943

The onset of bad weather pushed the new air campaign back to 18 October. Several raids were launched over the days that followed but weather conditions prevented repeated daily attacks. With the rhythm broken, the Japanese had time to recover and make good any damage, reducing the cumulative effect of the Campaign.

After an attack on 29 October, another period of adverse weather gave the Japanese more breathing space to reinforce their defences. A dozen more cargo boats, the light cruiser *Tami* and the destroyer

Yunagi, arrived at Simpson Harbour during the last days of October. On 30 and 31 October and 1 November the American aircrews were put on stand-by, but bad weather over Rabaul caused the missions to be cancelled. It was the same story early in the dawn light of 2nd November when four squadrons of B-25Cs set off but were immediately recalled.

In the early hours of the same morning two F-5 Lightnings from the 8th Photo Squadron were dispatched to Rabaul, where they found clear skies and no turbulence. They also discovered seven Japanese destroyers, a refuelling tanker, twenty cargo ships and 237 aircraft on Rabaul's two airfields, 170 of which were identified as fighters.

A line-up of Photo Reconnaissance F-5 Lightnings of the 17th PS on Guadalcanal, later in the war. (M. Claringbould)

As the two F-5s headed home, a flotilla of Japanese cruisers and destroyers which had been engaged in a night battle against American naval units supporting the landings on Bougainville, also arrived in Simpson Harbour.

On receipt of the news, Brigadier-General Ennis Whitehead, the head of Kenney's 5th AF Bomb Groups, decided to reactivate the mission. It was imperative to eliminate the Japanese naval threat against the Bougainville landings. An anti-shipping strike on Simpson Harbour thus became the primary mission, with the air bases now secondary targets.

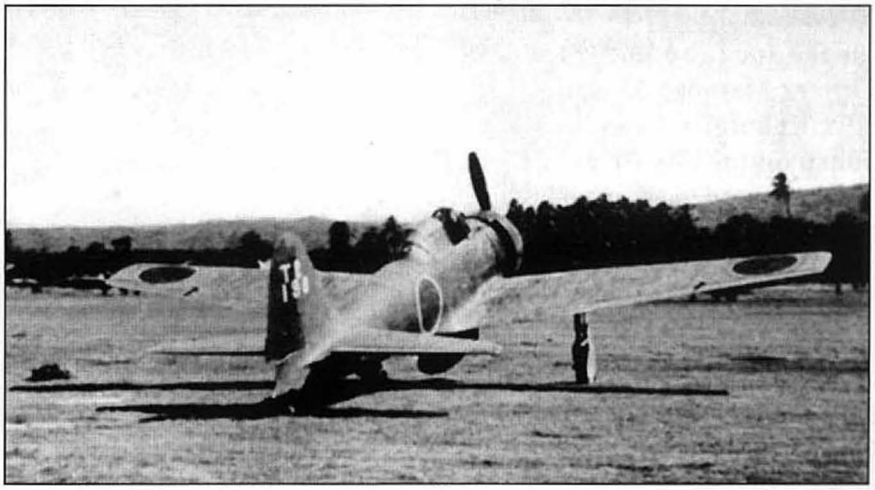
Even though AF intelligence estimated that the preceding raids had badly damaged the Japanese fighter strength at Rabaul, 5th AF HQ decided to send an escort of 80 P-38s to protect the bomber force and suppress the flak positions around the harbour.

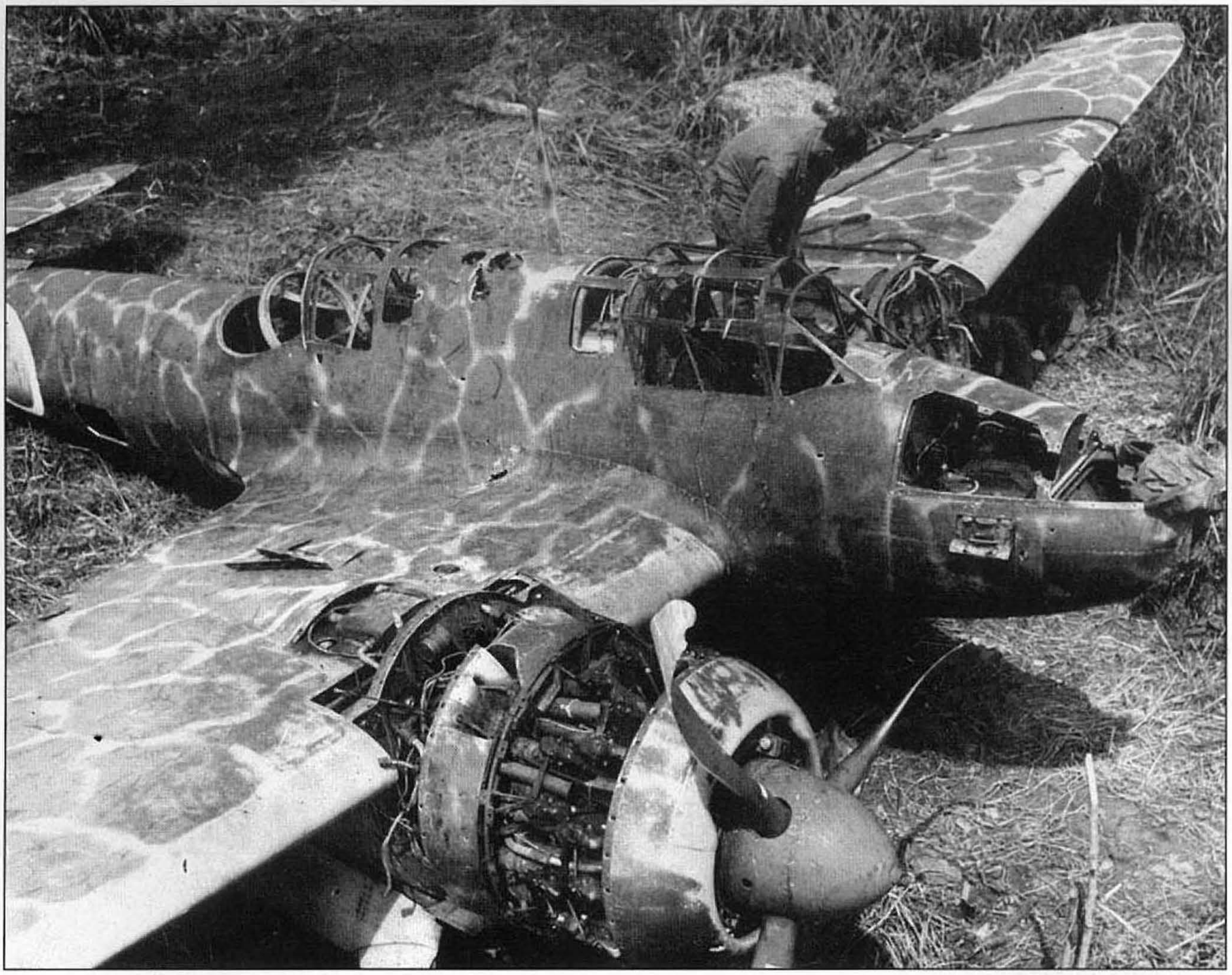
The escort mission was to be led by Major Gerald R. Johnson, 'head honcho' of the 9th FS and highly regarded for his leadership qualities. Johnson, who was destined to become an ace with 22 kills, chose Captain Richard I. Bong as his wingman for the mission. Bong would end the war as the leading American Pacific air ace.

The plan called for the P-38s of the 39th and 80th FS to open the attack three minutes ahead of the main force. Their mission was to strafe the airfield at Lakunai and the flak batteries around Simpson Harbour, to clear the way for the four squadrons of B-25C ground-strafers of the 345th BG, led by Major Ben Fridge and escorted by the P-38s of 475th Fighter Group.

Major John Henebry, CO of the 3rd BG, was picked to lead the main attack by the 13th and 90th BS against the naval vessels massed in Simpson Harbour. His

A Mitsubishi Zero Model 32 of the 204th Kôkûtai at Lakunai airfield Rabaul, October 1943. The Model 32 is easily distinguishable by its clipped wing tips (Y. Izawa)





escort was provided by the P-38s of the 433rd FS. Four minutes behind Henebry would be the 8th BS from the 3rd BG, plus the 71st and 405th BS from the 38th BG. Their escort was the P-38s of the 433rd FS. The five bomber squadrons were loaded with 1000lb bombs, timed to explode a few seconds after impact.

The units based at Port Moresby flew into Dobodura and at 10.45am on 2 November 1943, 73 P-38s and 78 B-25Cs* streamed off the runway and set course for Rabaul.

Lack of Surprise Proved Lethal

On the 2nd November 1943 Petty Officer Masajiro Kawato of the 253 Kokutai was enjoying his lunch on the airstrip at Lakunai. He was forced to abandon his bowl of rice when the alert sirens sounded. Thirty years later Kawato would cause a furore by falsely claiming in his memoirs** that he had shot down 'Pappy' Boyington. His CO, Captain Okamoto, scrambled from his hut and down

Above and below. This Ki.45-Kai-Hei of the 13th Sentai was discovered at Cape Gloucester. It may have been the one flown by Corporal Okindo Wakai who crash-landed on 2 September 1943 after an air battle with P-38s of the 9th FS. In this particular fight Gerald Johnson claimed victory over a twin engine fighter. (USMC)

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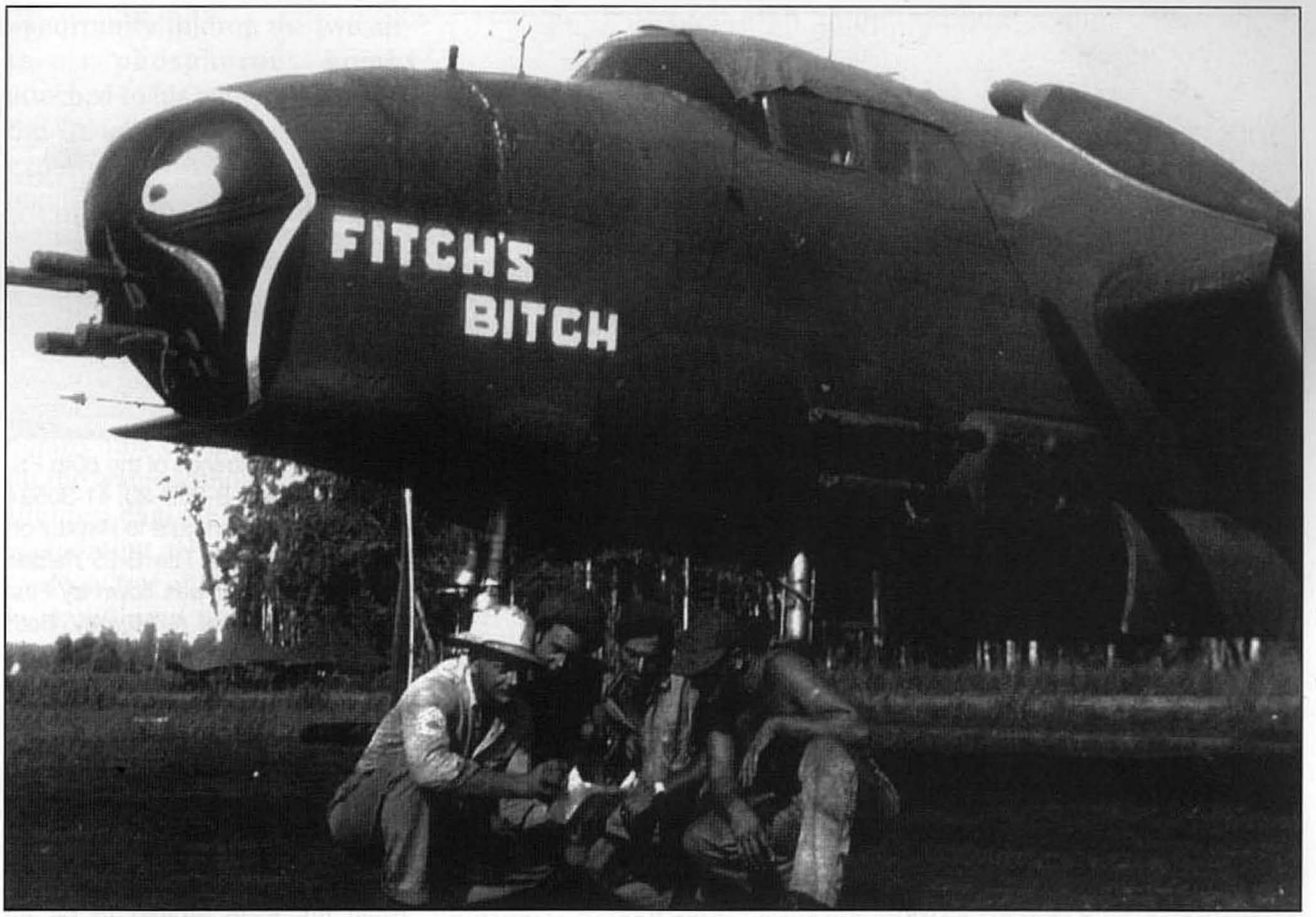
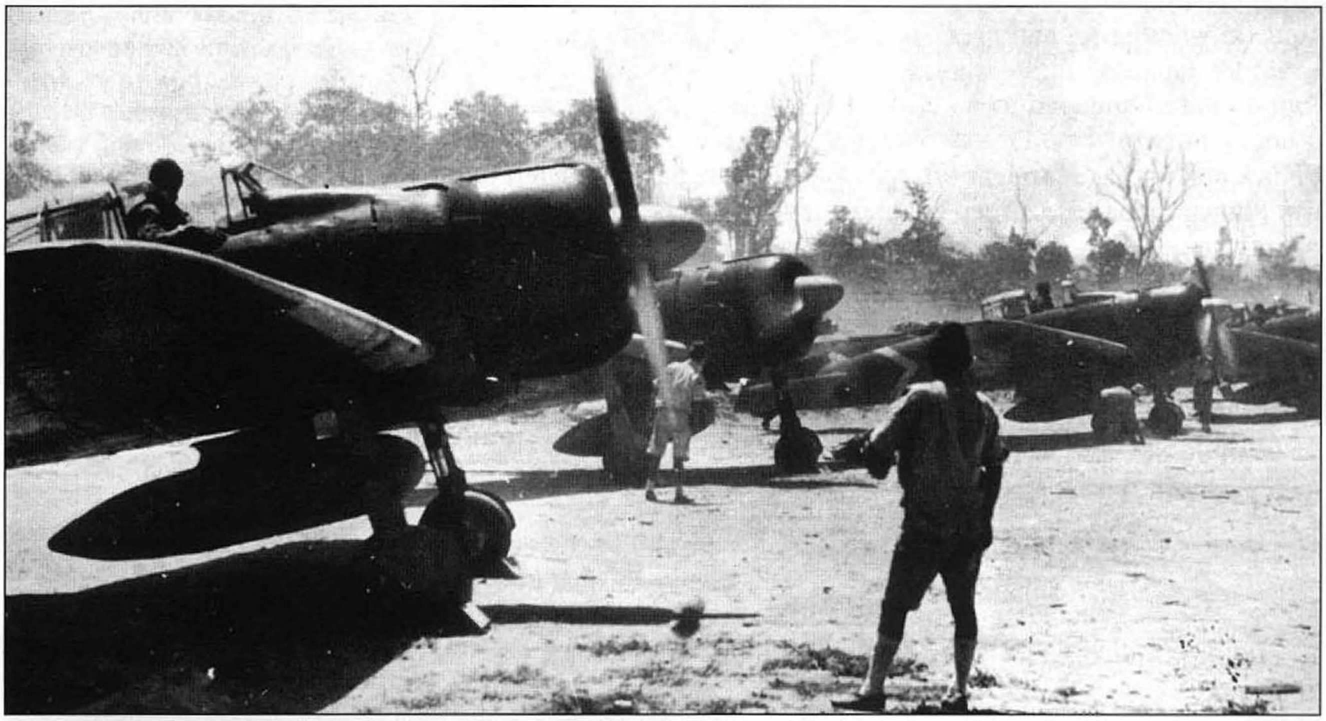
* Only 76 B-25s and 68 P-38s attacked Rabaul. The percentage of losses is calculated on this number.

** Lawato, 'Flight into conquest'.

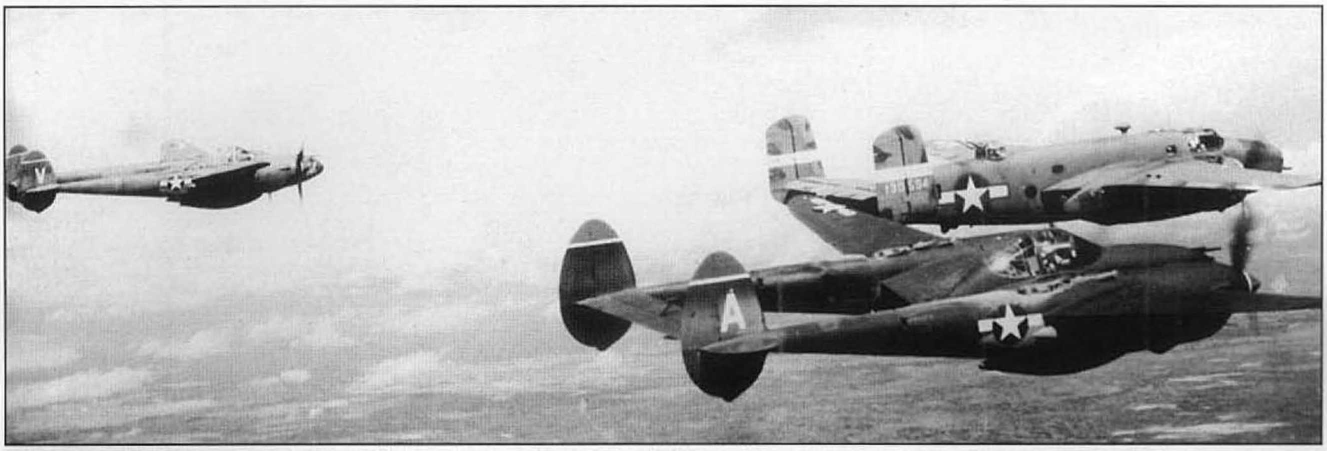


B-25 41-30372, *Fitch's Bitch,* photographed while operated by the 3rd Bomb Group. In later service with the 500th BS, 345th BG, Fitch's Bitch was lost on 8 January 1944, with Roland F. Myers at the controls. (M. Claringbould)



Mitsubishi A6M3 Zeros of The First Naval Air Corps prepare for take-off from Rabaul in support of Operation 'RO-GO', November 1943. Note the pilots using their Zeros' raised seat option to advantage while taxiing.

The Imperial Japanese Navy persisted in operating it's aircraft carrier trained units from land bases throughout the Solomon Islands campaign. The Japanese lost many experienced pilots in the later half of 1943 who were sorely missed in the great battles of 1944. (Aero Journal, D. R.)



Two P-38H Lightnings of the 80th FS, 8th FG, escort a B-25D-20, 41-30594 of the 501st BS, enroute to Rabaul on 2 November 1943. The B-25 named *Arkansas Traveler* was flown by First Lieutenant Michael A. Murphy. Both P-38s were flown by men who finished the war with 15 victories. Major Edward 'Porky' Craig, 80th FS Commanding Officer flew 'A' 42-66835 and First Lieutenant Cyril F. Homer flew 'V'. Major Craig's usual mount was 42-66506; he flew a spare aircraft that day.

While the P-38 proved to be an excellent long-range escort fighter, the twin-engine design had certain limitations. During the extended dogfight on 2 November, the American pilots tried to lure the Zeros into a high altitude combat where their supercharged engines would give the P-38s an advantage, allowing them to employ their superior fire-power in 'hit and run' manoeuvres.

Unfortunately, the low-flying B-25s acted like a magnet for the Japanese fighters and the P-38s were obliged to drop down low to protect the bombers. This sucked them into a classic dogfight where the ability to turn inside your opponent often decided the outcome. In this situation, the heavier twin-engine P-38 was no match for the nimble Zero.

It also seems that splitting the P-38s into two groups, on 2 November, arriving over the target at separate times, reduced their effectiveness in countering the numerically stronger Japanese force. (NASM)

the line of parked aircraft, shouting to pilots and ground crews to prepare for takeoff. Within a matter of minutes, more than a hundred fighters – mainly A6M3 Zeros – were climbing away from Lakunai, Vanakanau and Tobera.

Escort leader Major Johnson quickly realised that the element of surprise was lost as he led the P-38s of the 9th FS and the first wave of B-25Cs along St. George's Channel, between Rabaul and Duke of York Island, when two Japanese destroyers on point duty greeted the intruders with a hail of flak.

The 9th FS P-38s were the first into action in Simpson Harbour. Johnson's section gained altitude to protect the B-25s while Captain R. Bills took the 39th FS in low to strafe out the flak positions. Fortunately, the 39th encountered little opposition and disengaged without serious damage. As they withdrew over Rabaul township however, they were hounded by a lone Zero and in the following melee, the American pilots caught a glimpse of a P-38 (2nd/Lt F. Love) crashing in flames on the edge of town. Later, they could not confirm whether he had been shot down by the Zero or flak.

More Japanese fighters joined in the attack. 2nd/Lt C.G. Planck found himself engaged by a Zero in a head-on attack and poured in a heavy burst of fire. Fatally damaged, the Zero attempted to ram Planck and managed to tear off one propeller and part of the left tail fin. Planck managed to keep his plane level but was forced to ditch near Cape Gazelle – deep in enemy territory. Amazingly, he managed to swim ashore where he was found by friendly natives who fed and hid him. Two months later, Planck was collected by a US Navy submarine.

A FURIOUS DOGFIGHT

The 80th FS led by Major E. 'Porky' Cragg, found itself engulfed by a swarm of Japanese fighters (the mission reports speak of 60–100 Zeros). The 39th FS rode to their rescue like the proverbial 5th Cavalry. A furious dogfight followed. J.K. Stanfer* then a 2nd/Lt with the 80th FS said of the Zeros, "They were everywhere" and his reaction as the first Zeke with its red meatball on the fuselage flashed by was the classic, "What am I doing here? I could be in training or transport!" He was very impressed with the aggressiveness of the Japanese pilots and found himself in a head on pass with a Zeke. "We blazed away at one another until last possible second. It was I who broke away with a violent pushover to avoid a head-on crash."

At this moment, Petty Officer Kawato claimed he was circling at 6,500 ft. He was anxious to join the fray but was looking for an opportunity to drop the two air-to-air phosphorous bombs attached to his wing racks. It was the first time the Japanese had experimented with this type of bomb. Fused to explode at 500 metres, the bombs were intended to be dropped on Allied bomber formations. On detonating, they would shower burning fragments over a radius of 20 metres. Kawato need not have bothered; the two bombs only exploded when they hit the water without causing the slightest damage to the B-25s he was aiming at!

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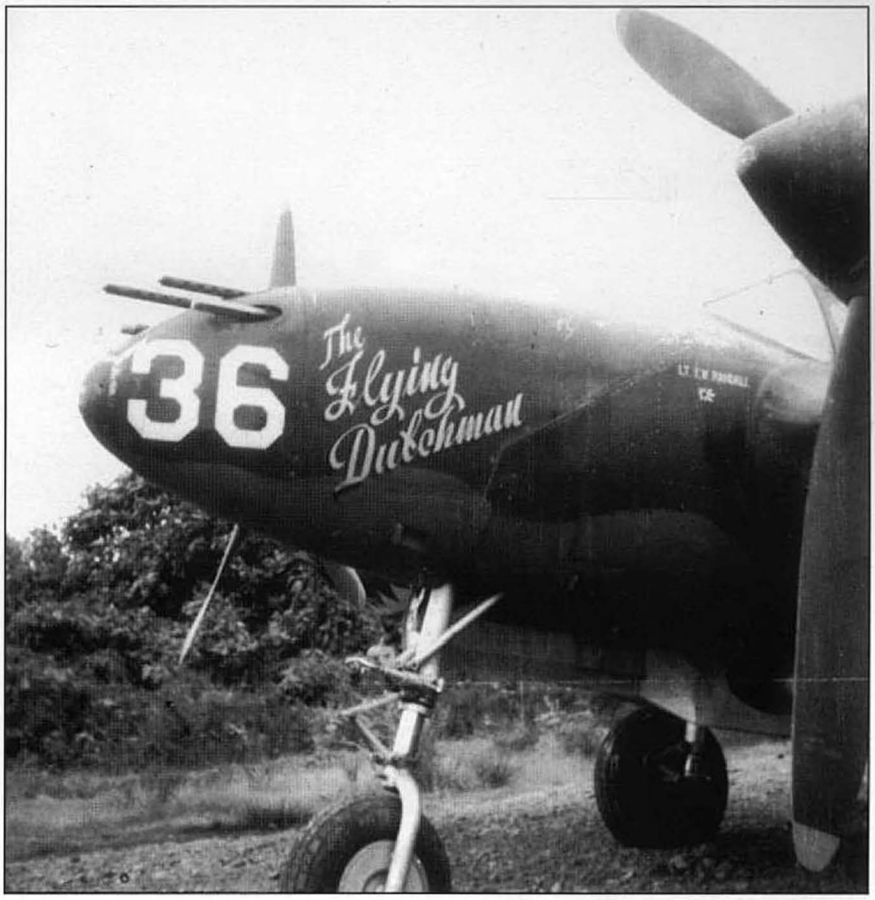
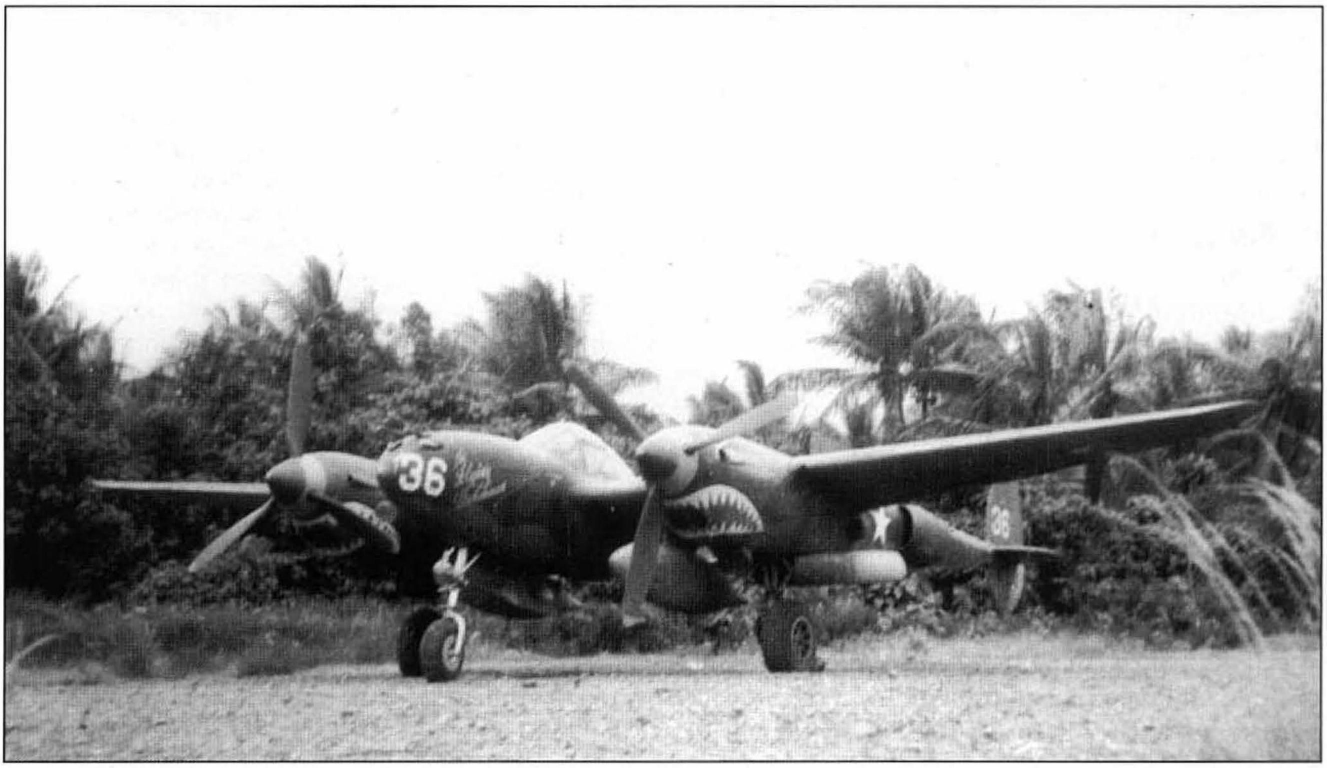
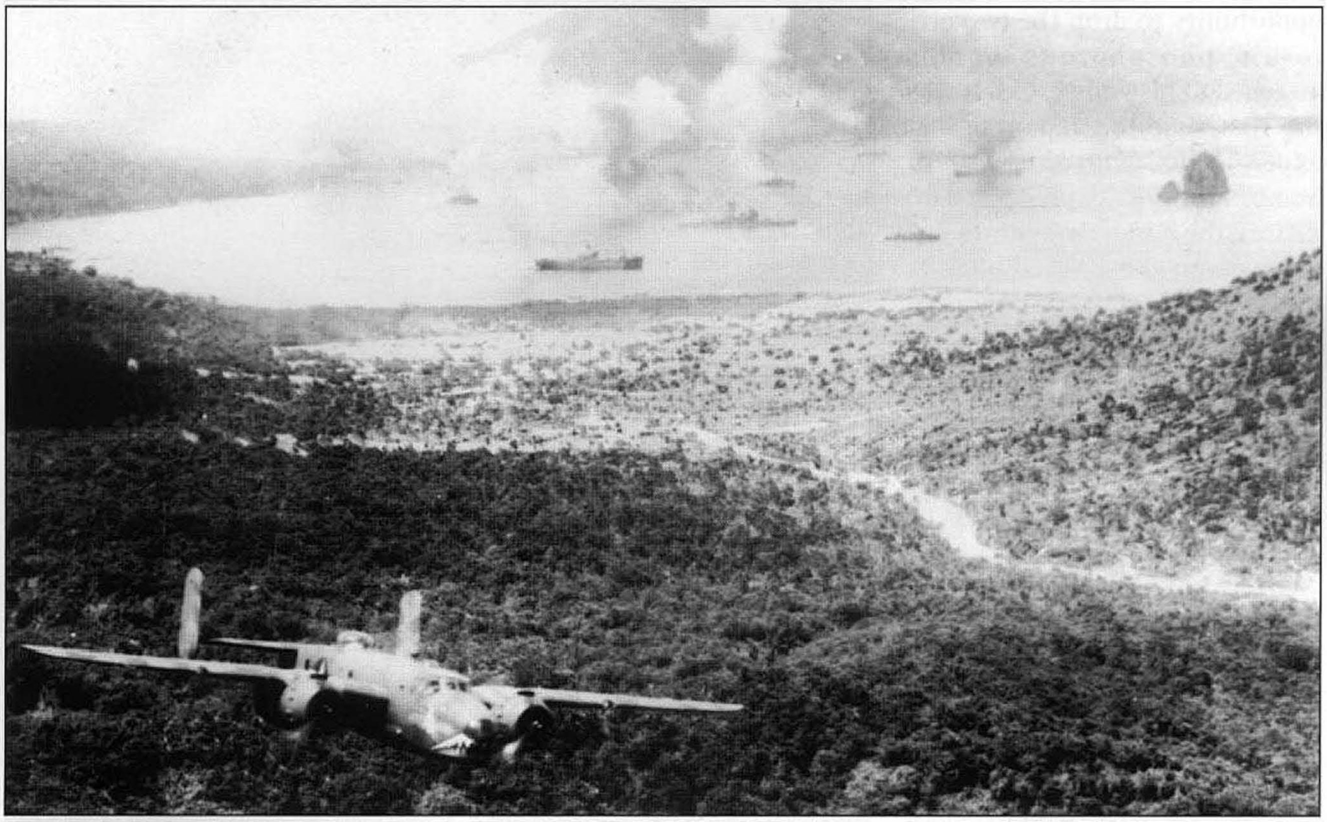
* McAulay.

Now free of the encumbrance, he dived onto a group of P-38s who were trying to act as a defensive wall between the Zeros and the B-25s. Gathering extra speed in a power-dive, Kawato made a stern pass at a P-38. A burst of fire sent the American plane down, crashing in flames into the harbour. With his ammunition almost exhausted, Kawato set course for home but was bounced by a P-38. In an effort to escape, he dived from 13,000 ft to wave top height. His pursuer hung on grimly and was joined by a second P-38. With a burst of fire, part of his engine cowling was blown away and his engine was also damaged. It was only the timely arrival of Senior Petty Officer Fukumoto that spared Kawato's life



Two photos of P-38F-5 42-12645, *The Flying Dutchman,* flown by First Lieutenant Edward W. Randell of the 39th FS. These photos were taken at Milne bay shortly after Randell's first and only victory on 11 April 1943. (Australian War Memorial)





Lieutenant Chuck Howe of the 90th BS, 3rd BG, pulls away from Simpson Harbour in his B-25 named *Here's Howe*. He eventually rose to Command the 90th BS. (via Aero Journal)

and allowed him to reach Tobera, where he walked away from a rather untidy crash-landing. Following the air battle Kawato claimed two P-38s.*

GROUND-STRAFING B-25s

It was now the turn of the B-25s. Coming down over the hills behind Rabaul, the first eight aircraft of the 498th BS levelled out over the town at 130 ft and dropped the first salvo of para-frags, then hosed the quayside with their .50 cal machine guns.

At the last minute Major C. Colharp, the 498th BS leader, caught sight of a Kawanishi H8K Emily four-engine flying boat and managed to straddle it with a stick of para-frags. Within seconds the Japanese fighters were harrying the B-25s who closed formation to lend each other fire support. The air engagement lasted eight nail-biting minutes but the B-25s managed to avoid any losses or serious damage and claimed to have shot down four Zeros and a Hamp.

Behind the 498th came the 501st BS, tasked with neutralising the 83 flak batteries of Sulphur Creek and the air base at Lakunai. The American bombers were met with a wall of fire from the ground while Zeros filled the sky ahead, intent on cutting off their escape. *Hellzapoppin*, the B-25 of 2nd/Lt O. Moore received a direct hit which left one engine in flames, while Captain H.L. Knoll had his right rudder torn away by an AA shell. The cabin was holed in several places but miraculously none of the crew were hit. Similar damage was caused to the B-25 of Captain W.J. McGowan, but fortunately all three aircraft stayed in the air.

The 501st BS just finished its bombing run over the anchorage when 1st/Lt Marion F. Kirby saw two destroyers open fire on the sea ahead of the low flying bombers, in the hope that one of them would run into an exploding column of water. There was even more trouble in store; up to fifty Zeros literally threw themselves at the 501st. The squadron responded by closing in around Moore's burning aircraft and fighting back – the 501st BS gunners claiming eight Japanese fighters. Unfortunately the attempt to protect Moore's B-25 failed and a few minutes later his plane parted company with the rest of the formation as the 501st turned to strafe the Japanese airstrip at Rapopo. Moore managed to ditch his burning B-25 close to the shore but only three Americans survived. They apparently fell into enemy hands and were executed by the Japanese a few months later.

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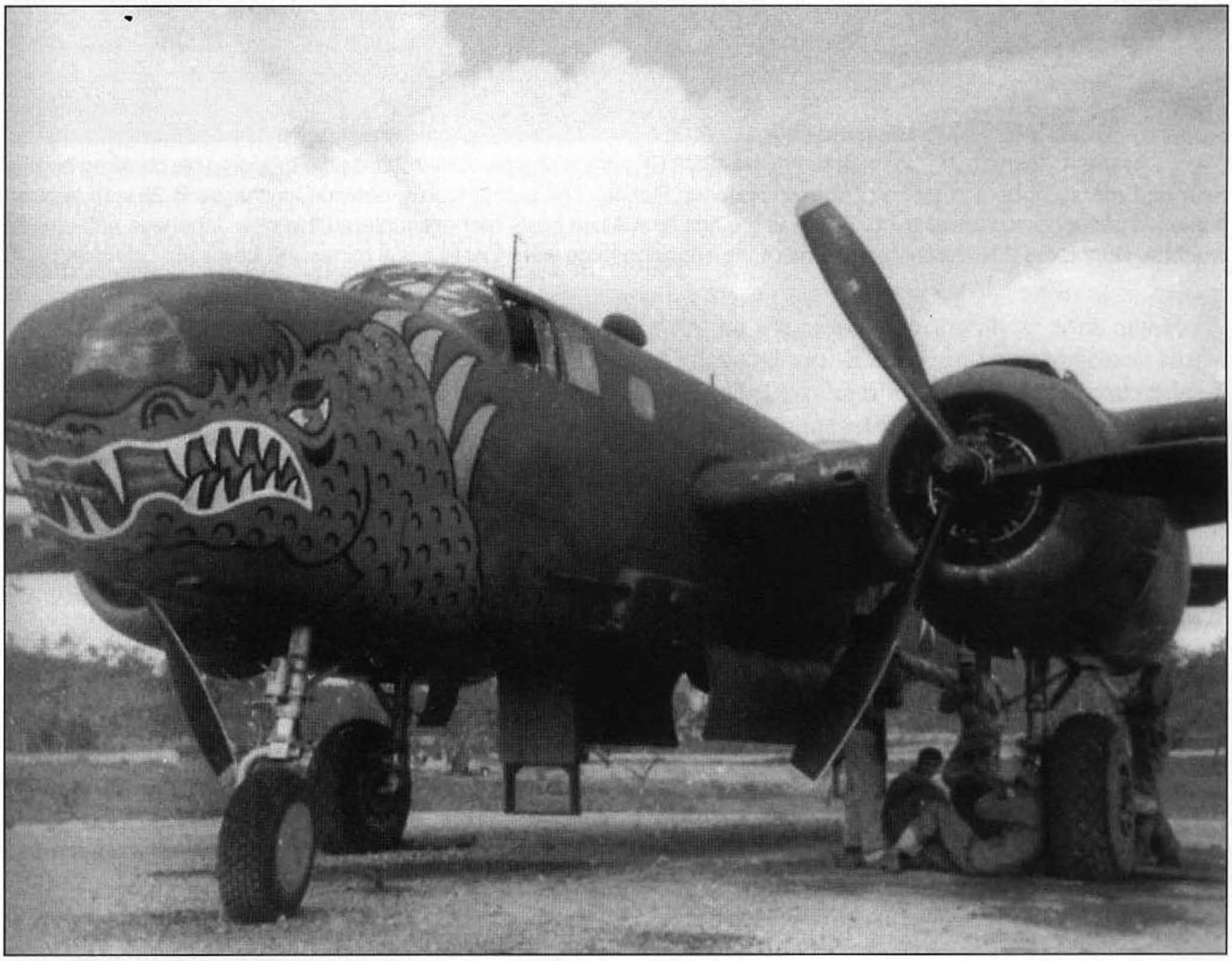
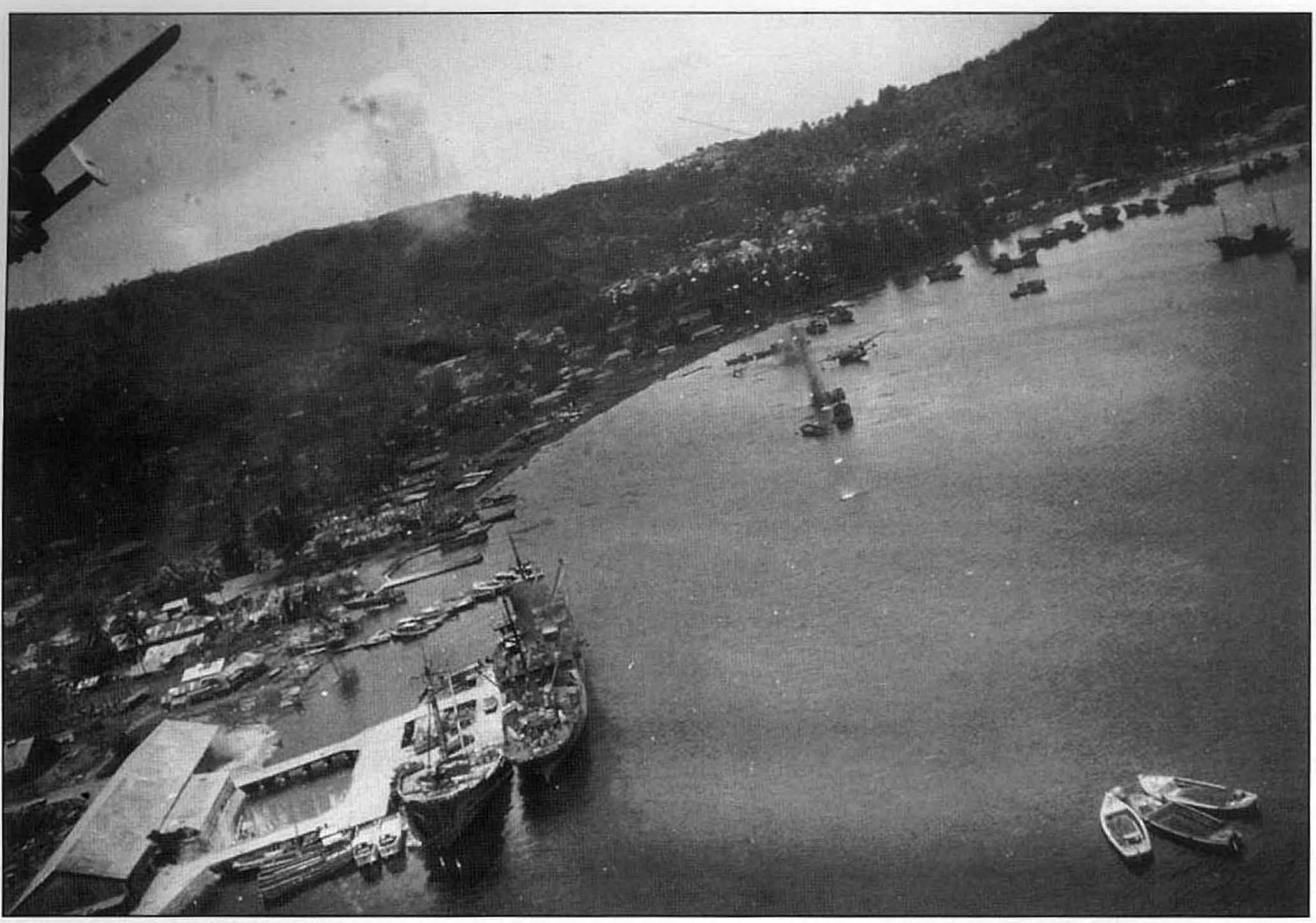
* In his memoirs Kawato said his aircraft had been damaged by two F4U Corsairs, one of which was flown by a bearded pilot! However, there were no Corsairs over Rabaul that day. Kawato's P-38 claims were a complete fabrication. Research by Michael Claringbould and Japanese post-war historians indicates that the Japanese pilots substantially over-claimed their victories on 2 November 1943 and that Kawato may not have even flown that day.

Next, it was the turn of the 500th BS to start the hell-fire run on Rabaul with Captain M.H. Mortensen in the lead. His

This blurry but dramatic photo shows a A6M3 Zeke that has just taken off from Lakunai airfield. It carries the code number 720-28. This picture was taken with the fuselage mounted rearward facing camera, fitted to 501st BS aircraft, which means the B-25 must have just flown over the Japanese fighters tail! (Australian War Memorial)



North American B-25D-1 41-30190 was flown by First Lieutenant James A. Hungerpiller Jr. of the 71st BS, 2 November 1943. The machine took a direct hit from AA on the port engine while attacking a destroyer, it then flew directly over the heavy cruiser *Haguro* and crashed 300 metres beyond. All aboard were killed. (L.J.Hickey)

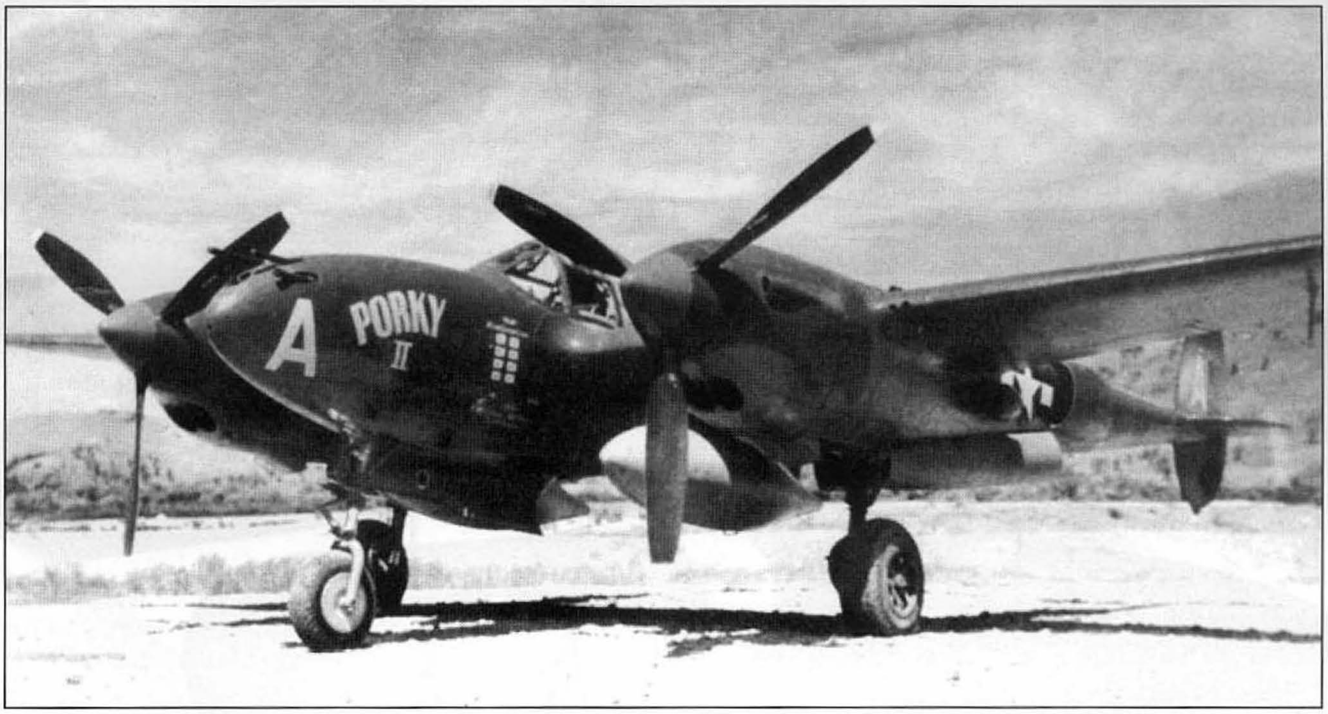


Major Chester A Coltharp Jr., Commander of the 498th BS climbs sharply to starboard after dropping his parafrag bombs near an Emily flyingboat at rest on Simpson Harbour, Rabaul. The puff of smoke behind Coultharp's B-25 was from an exploded phosphorous aerial mine. This was the first time Allied pilots had encountered this new Japanese anti-aircraft weapon. During the 2 November raid none of the attacking force were lost to aerial mines. (K. Lewis via L. Hickey)

Lee van Atta, a war correspondent with a front row seat in Major Henebry's B-25 reported: "A solid curtain of black anti-aircraft puffs lay over the [volcanic]craters, broken by spitting fire and exploding phosphorous shells. It seemed as if the rumbling volcanoes had come to earthshaking life. Our airspeed had dropped to barely 150, climbing at 2,000 ft a minute, and we were a sitting duck if the Japanese in the volcanic pass positions had not been harried themselves by the lead we were hurling... and the anti-personnel bombs 'Fridge' had dropped seconds before. Henebry was slightly ahead of us and the rest of the formation slightly behind. They were holding a little lower, apparently to get the full benefit of their .50s without endangering our two lead Mitchells. And suddenly, amid skies which seemed if they must suddenly be aflame, Simpson Harbour was before us - a bathtub shaped anchorage barely two miles wide and with an unparalleled defensive machine surrounding its deep water-filled tub.

"Henebry lines up our *Notre Dame de Victoire* on three ships in a row - a freighter, a transport and a cruiser. The heavy fire from the warships at water-level threw up huge waterspouts in front of the attackers. The forward fire-power of the B-25s again bewildered the Japanese and some hid behind their armour plate and never attempted to return the fire. Henebry strafed the freighter and thought he saw some fires before he bombed. He pulled up sharply directly over it and dropped a 1,000lb bomb. He thought he hit it and a second bomb definitely hit, setting fire to the ship. But Henebry had made what he called the 'arch mistake'. When he pulled up over the second ship, he found the cruiser a lot closer than he thought and he couldn't get *Notre Dame de Victoire's* nose down to get his guns on the deck of the cruiser. He saw the Japanese pom-pom guns following him but could not retaliate. He could feel hits and knew they were shot up pretty good. There was no way to hold a formation in the confines of the harbour.

Henebry knew they were on their own."



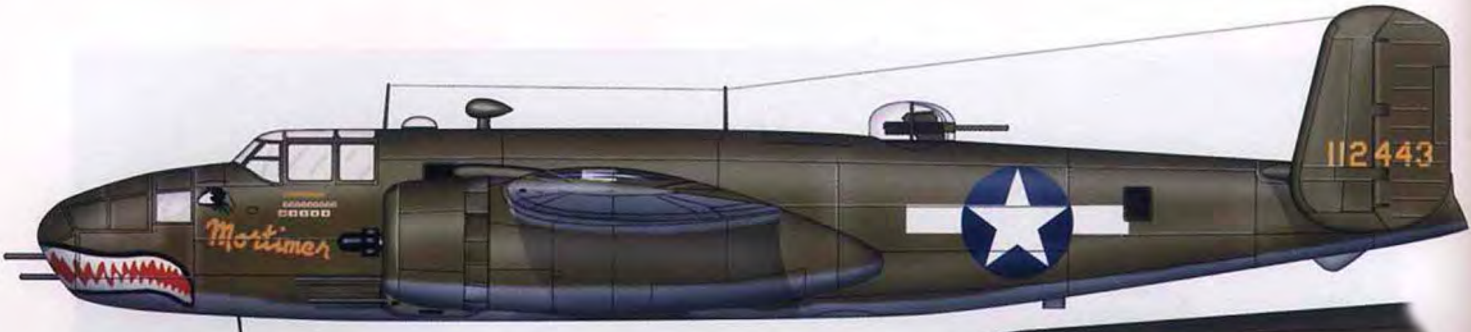
Major Edward 'Porky' Cragg's personal aircraft, P-38H-1 42-66506 *Porky II*, at Dobodura. The eight victory markings indicate that the photo was taken about August 1943. Cragg was posted missing in action on 26 December 1943 following a fierce air battle off cape Cloucester, in which he scored his 15th and last victory. (NASM)

wingman - 2nd/Lt A.R. Krasnickas - was hit by a shell in the bomb-bay and one engine stopped. He managed to keep the aircraft level though, by quickly jettisoning his bomb load and feathering the prop of the dead engine. A second or two later, Mortensen's aircraft was also hit in the bomb-bay by an AA shell which caused one of his phosphorus bombs to explode. Krasnickas - flying close behind Mortensen - was unable to avoid the burning cloud of phosphorous spewing out of the lead B-25. The wingman's plane was instantly transformed into a gigantic fireball which fell out of the sky into the coconut groves west of Rabaul. There were no survivors.

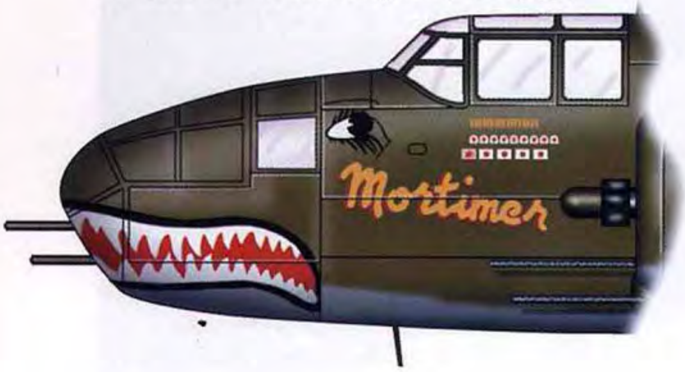
For Mortensen the situation seemed hopeless. A thick cloud of white smoke had filled the cockpit and had found its way into the wings from where it was now streaming out of the engine cowling. Believing that both engines were on fire, Mortensen closed down the burning engine only to find himself under attack from several Japanese fighters. Regaining some much-needed composure, Mortensen realised that the damage was not as serious as first feared. He set course for Dobodura and made it home, trailing a long plume of white smoke.

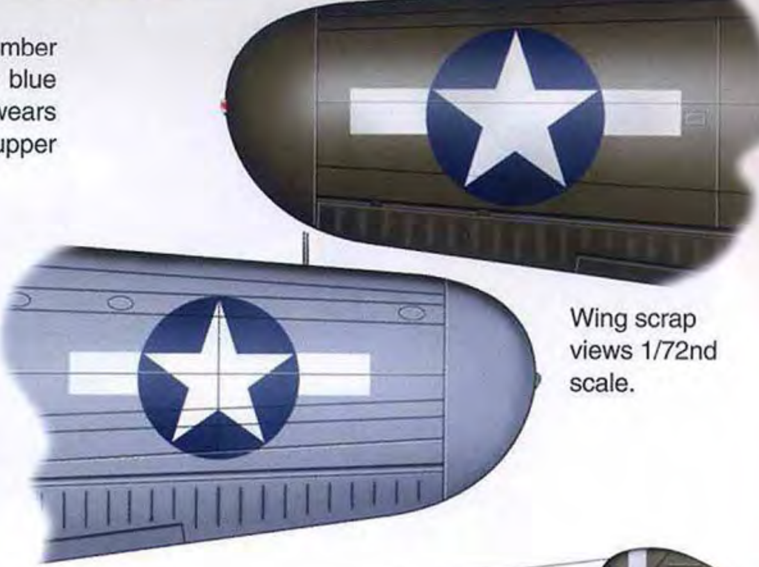
While the 500th was drawing the concentrated fire of Rabaul's flak batteries the 499th BS arrived, led by Captain G. W. Taylor. Armed with phosphorous bombs, their mission was to take out the flak batteries in Sulphur Creek. As they carried out their attack, a spent .50 cal cartridge case struck the detonator of a bomb falling away from the B-25 piloted by Lt. W.N. Parke. The bomb exploded beneath Parke's B-25, filling the interior with smoke and leaving the entire crew badly shaken. Luckily, the phosphorus bombs only contained a light explosive charge and Parke was able to make it back to Dobodura. One section of the 500th managed to pass directly over the Japanese Navy seaplane base at Matupi, and destroy at least four of the fifteen Rufe single-float fighters moored on the water.

Elsewhere, the P-38s of the 432nd FS found themselves overwhelmed by a swarm of Japanese fighters coming at them from

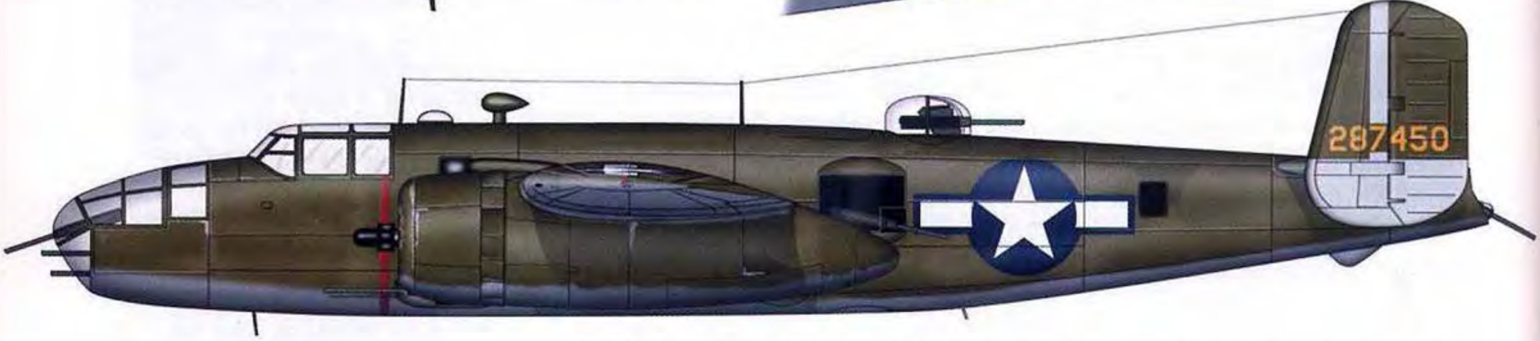

Mortimer
112443

B-25C 41-12443 *Mortimer,* of the 3rd Bomb Group, November 1943. Note the interim style stars-and-bars with no blue borders. Like all the B-25s represented here *Mortimer* wears a standard USAAF colour scheme of Olive Drab upper surfaces with Neutral Gray lower surfaces.

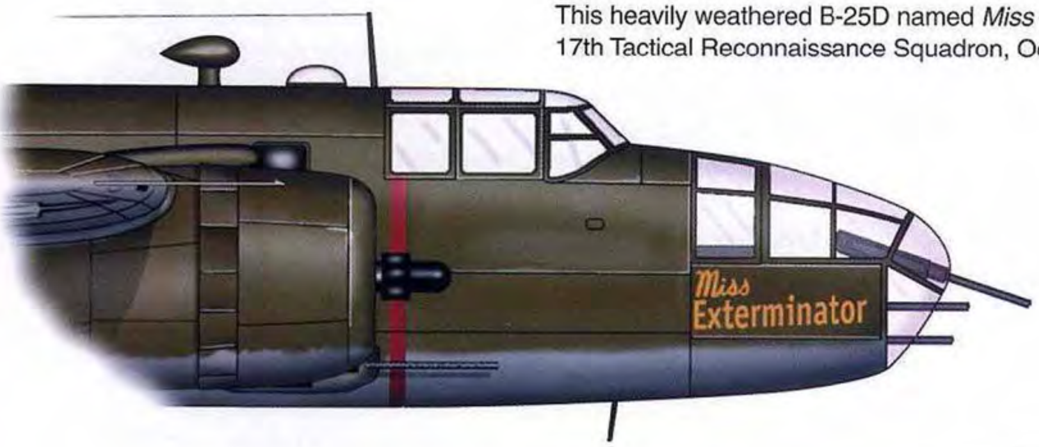




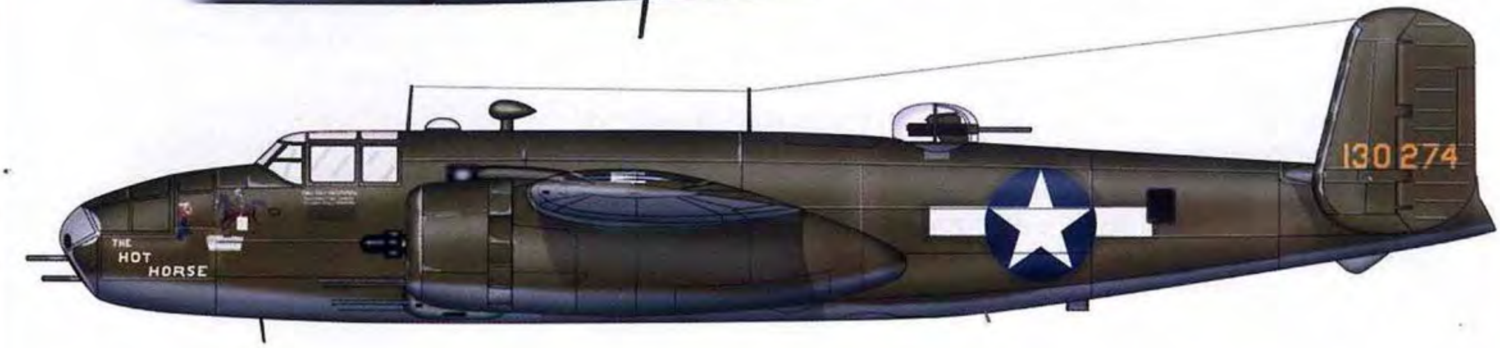
Wing scrap views 1/72nd scale.



This heavily weathered B-25D named *Miss Exterminator*, was operated by the 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, October 1943.


Miss
Exterminator

Below: B-25D *The Hot Horse* of the 13th BS, 3rd BG, November 1943. It crash-landed at Dobodura after the 2 November raid but was repaired.


THE
HOT
HORSE
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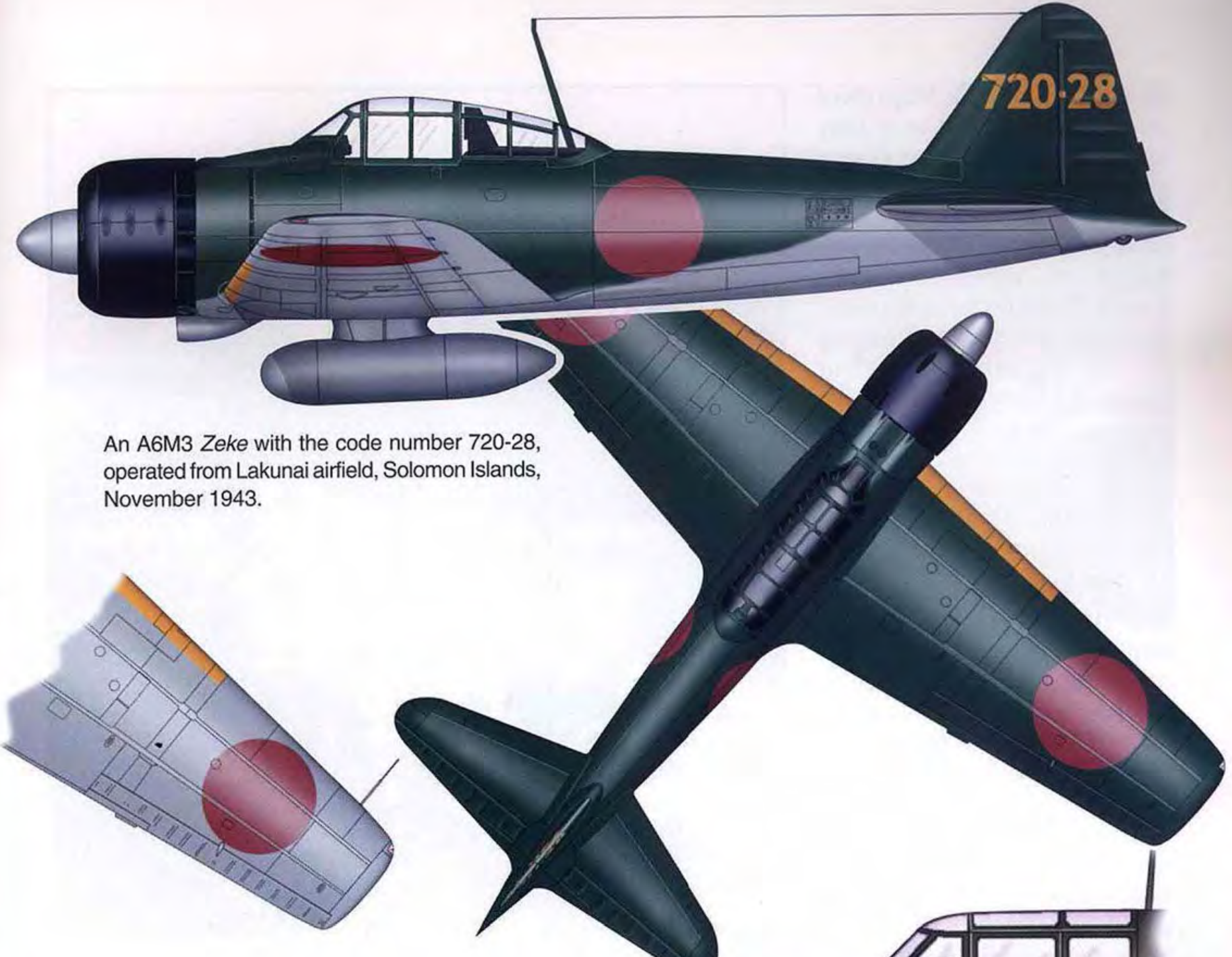
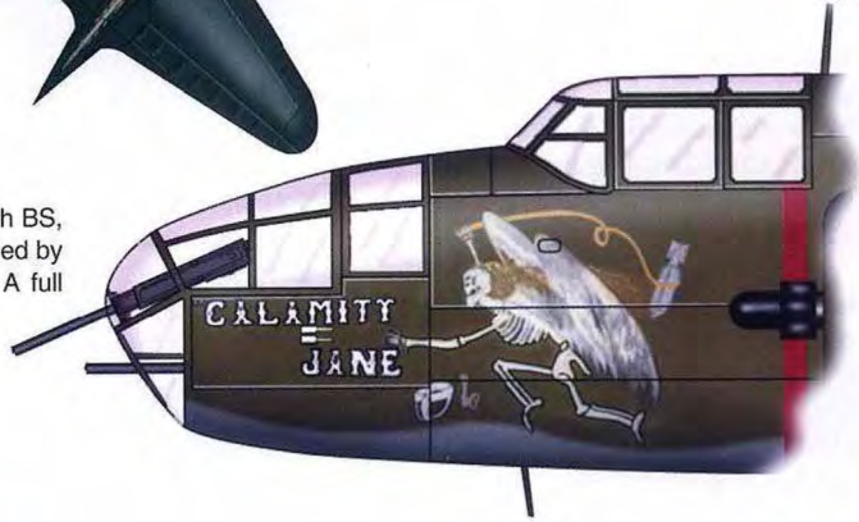
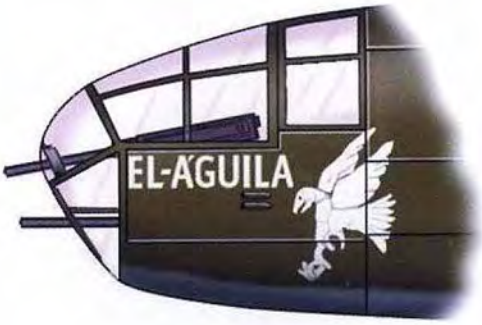


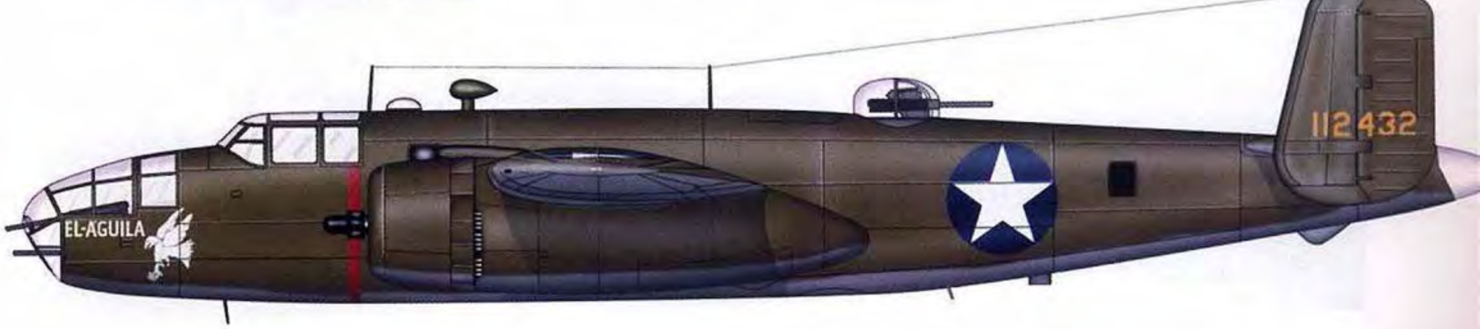
An A6M3 *Zeke* with the code number 720-28, operated from Lakunai airfield, Solomon Islands, November 1943.



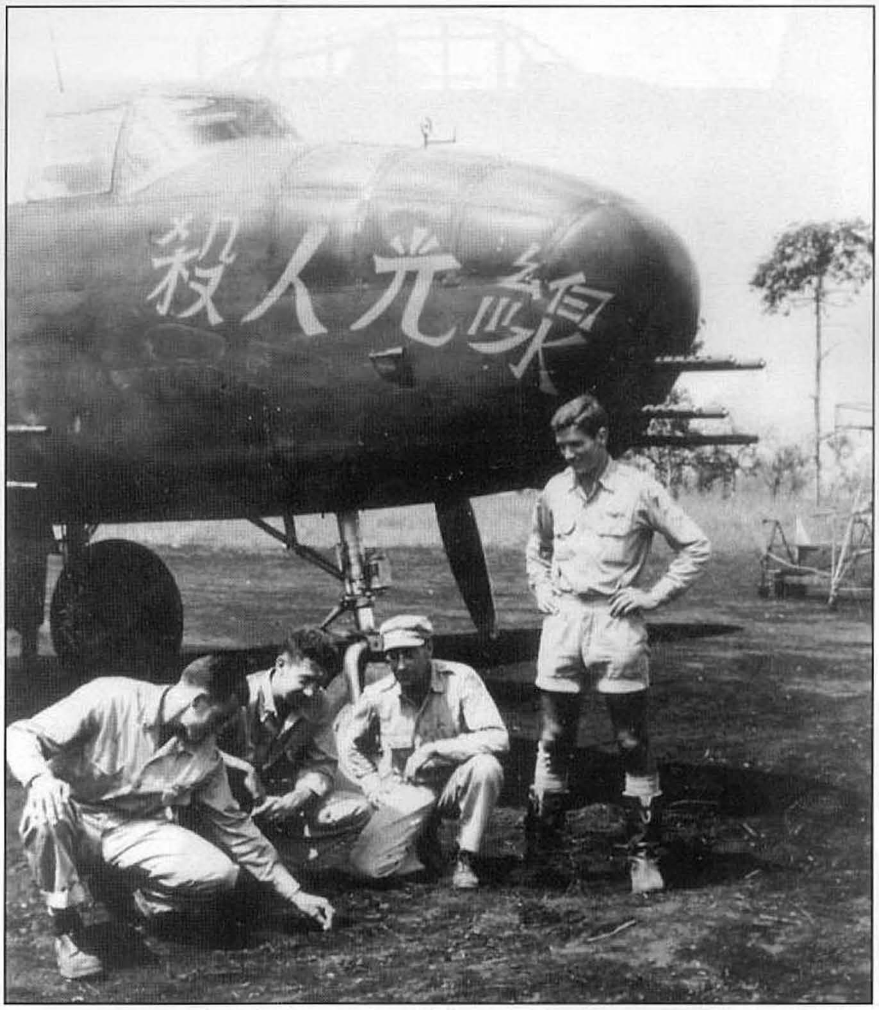
B-25D 41-12962 *Calamity Jane* of the 13th BS, 3rd Bomb Group. *Calamity Jane* was named by pilot Robert A. Price after his wife Jane. A full side view appears on the back cover.



B-25 *El Aguila* of the 13th BS, 3rd BG, September 1942. Note the Insignia Red forward fuselage stripe intended as a safety warning for when the propellers were spinning.



all directions. 1st/Lt L. Mayo dived on one he identified as a Tony and got in a lethal burst at very close range. The Tony disintegrated and debris struck the wing of the P-38, forcing Mayo to bale out, his two wingmen orbiting his parachute while he descended. 2nd/Lt H.A. Hedrick - flying top cover - was bounced by four Oscars who shot one of his engines to pieces. One of the Japanese pilots made the mistake of crossing Hedrick's field of fire and was shot down with a single burst. The remaining Oscars promptly broke off their attack.



Major Raymond Wilkins and his aircrew with their B-25D, August 1943. The Japanese words on the nose mean kiss of death and at one stage it was planned to have this as the 8th BG Unit insignia. However it was so time consuming to paint that only a few aircraft ever wore the marking. (L. Hickey)

BAPTISM BY FIRE

While the four squadrons of the 345th BG drew the attention of the flak guns, Major J.P. Henebry led 41 B-25Cs of the 3rd and 38th BG against the naval and cargo vessels at anchor in the stream. The Japanese warships clearly untroubled by the smoke rising from the harbour installations, put up a deadly curtain of fire in front of the oncoming B-25s. Normally, naval anti-aircraft guns had little effect on planes making a high-speed pass but with the B-25s attacking in low tight groups this was a different story.

Following Henebry, the 90th BS dropped 16 x 1,000lb and 500lb bombs and fired 19,000 machine-gun rounds. They claimed direct hits on a freighter and a cruiser, which 'appeared to roll over on its side with a large amount of flame and smoke coming from it.'*

The eight B-25s of the 13th BS lost one of their number in the attack. It was last seen with one engine on fire near the enemy air base at Vunakanau. A second, *The Hot Horse* crashed on its return to Dobodura. The 13th's gunners claimed two Zekes.

Behind the 13th, the second wave comprising the 8th, 71st and 405th BS, swept into the target area. The first squadron - the 8th - led by Major R. Wilkins saw the 13th make an unscheduled change of course entering the target area. Wilkins felt obliged to follow their lead and banked northwards only to find himself heading towards a narrow gap of clear air flanked by two rising columns of smoke that led to the anchorage. He quickly altered course to pass between them, with these unexpected manoeuvres throwing the rest of his formation off balance. Eye-witnesses later testified that Wilkins bombed a destroyer, leaving it 'a mass of flames and sinking'. Hampered by the clouds of smoke and hit by the relentless barrage of flak, Wilkins went after a cruiser whose guns blew apart his B-25. Pieces of his aircraft fell into the water at the mouth of Simpson Harbour and all aboard were lost.

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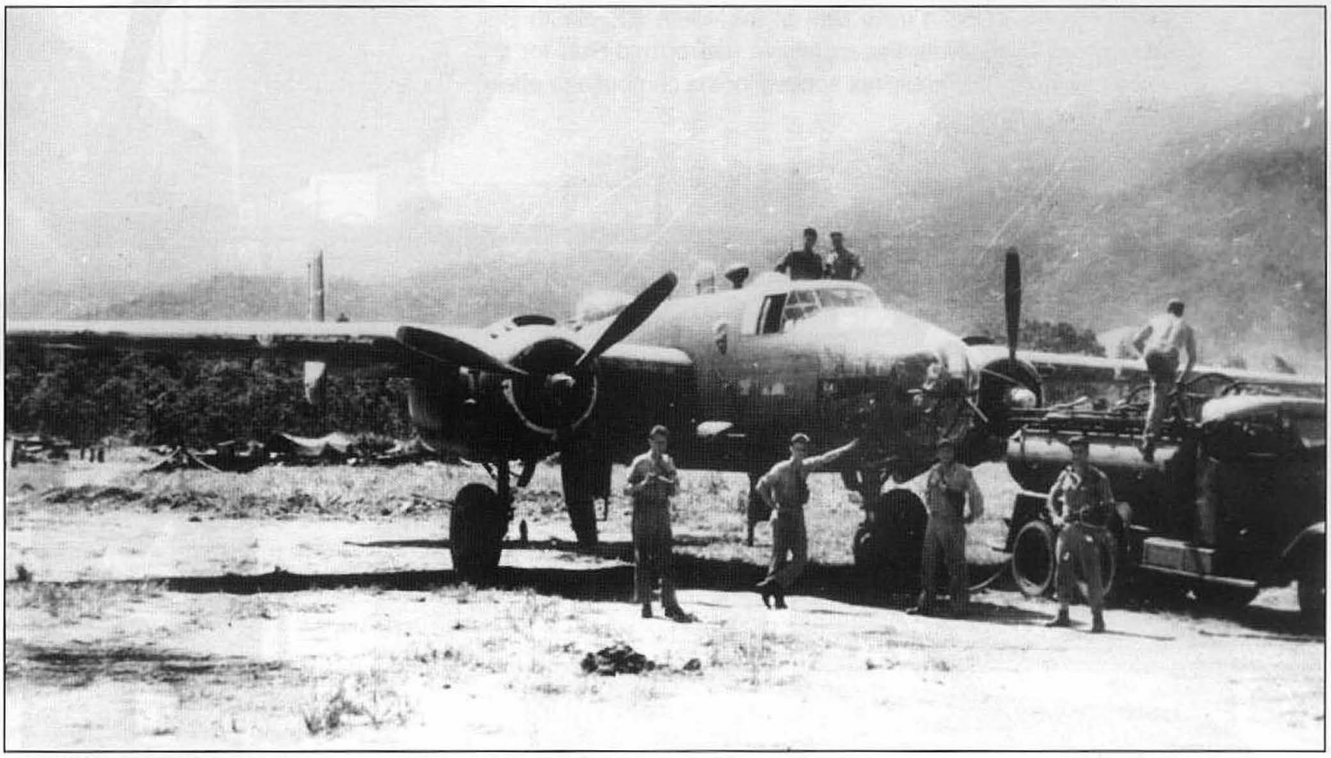
* Form 34, 3rd BG.



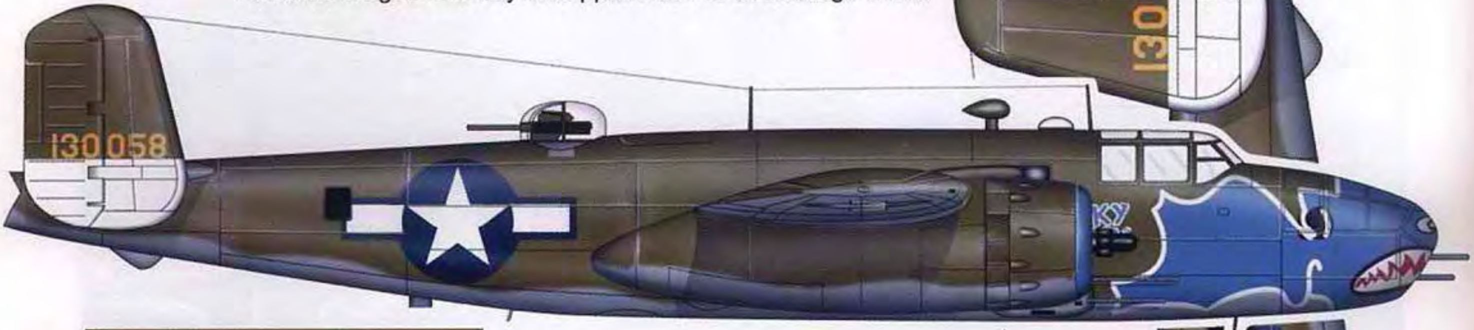
North American B-25D-25-NA 42-87450, *Miss Exterminator*, was assigned to the 17th TRS, 71st TRG at Port Moresby in October 1943. (R. C. Jones)

Shaken by the loss of their leader, the pilots of the 8th BS sought to have the commander of the 13th BS court-martialled for turning too soon, a move which led them directly over a cluster of flak batteries. The CO of the 13th BS persuaded them to drop their case by offering to propose Major Wilkins for the Medal of Honor and for his part in the raid Wilkins *was* posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The accompanying citation is at variance with the eye-witness reports of his fellow pilots:

"He strafed a group of small harbour vessels and then at low level, attacked an enemy destroyer. His 1,000lb bomb struck squarely amid-ship, causing the vessel to explode. From below-masthead height, he attacked a transport of some 9,000 tons, scoring a hit which engulfed the ship in flames. Bombs expended, he began to withdraw his squadron. A heavy cruiser barred the path. Unhesitatingly, to

A starboard side view of B-25D, *Miss Exterminator*. Note the heavily weathered camouflage. (R. C. Jones)

B-25D-5, 41-30058 *"Lucky Bat"* of the 499th BS, 345th BG, November 1943. Note the extensive use of mid-blue for the nose markings. Definitely not applied for the camouflage effect!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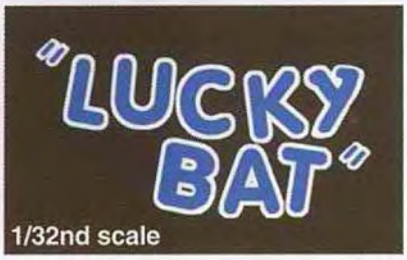
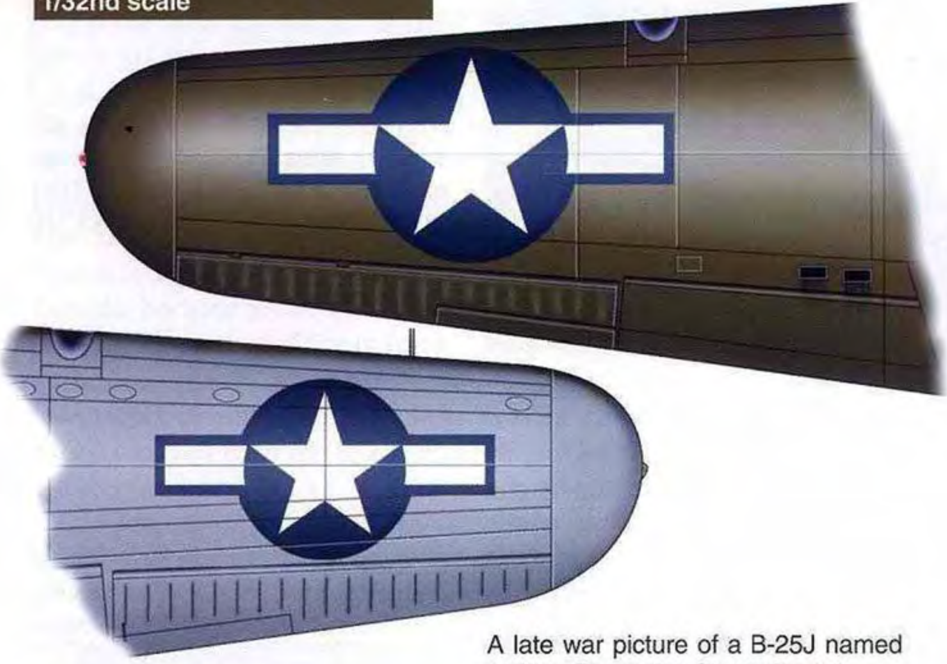
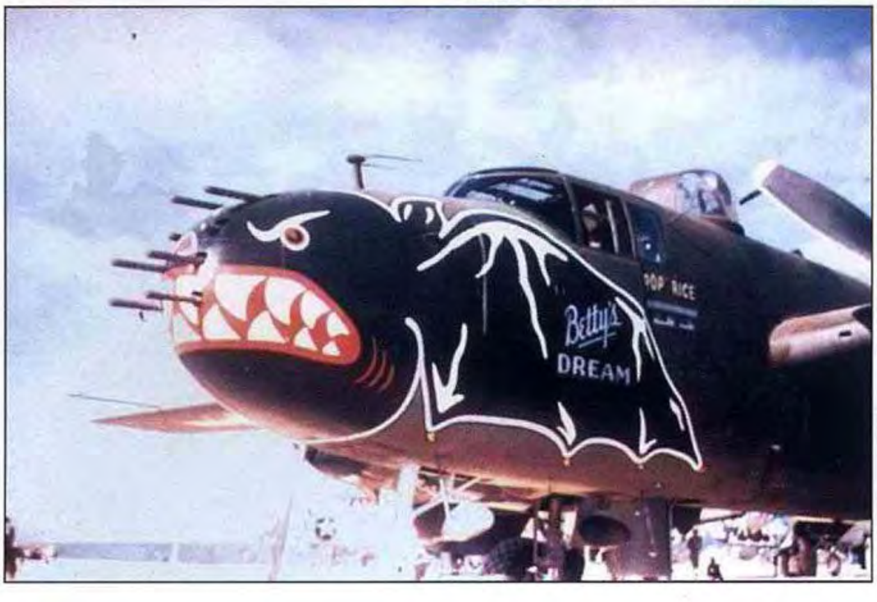
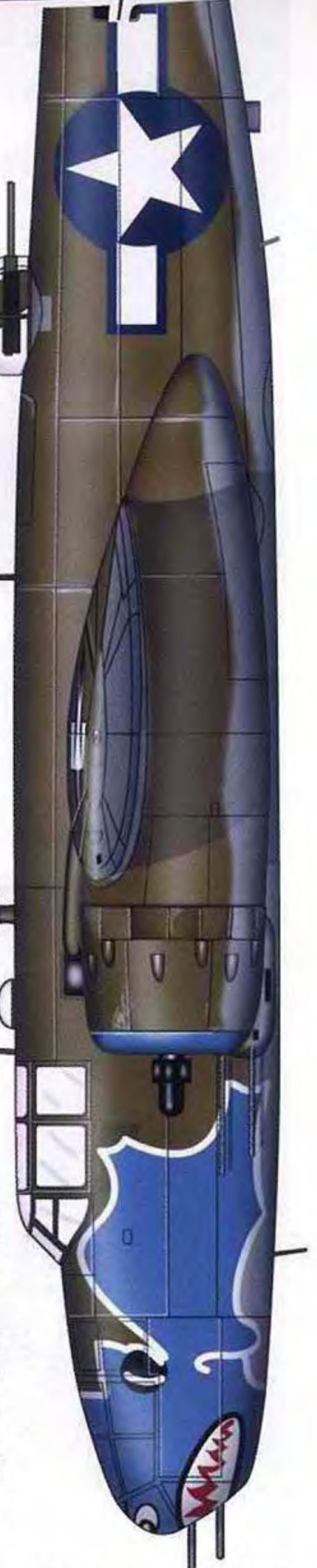


1/32nd scale



A late war picture of a B-25J named *Bettys Dream.* (M. Claringbould)


Betty's
DREAM



B-25 'Lucky Bat' port side and wing views, 1/72nd scale.

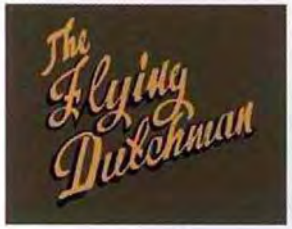
St. Louis Blues

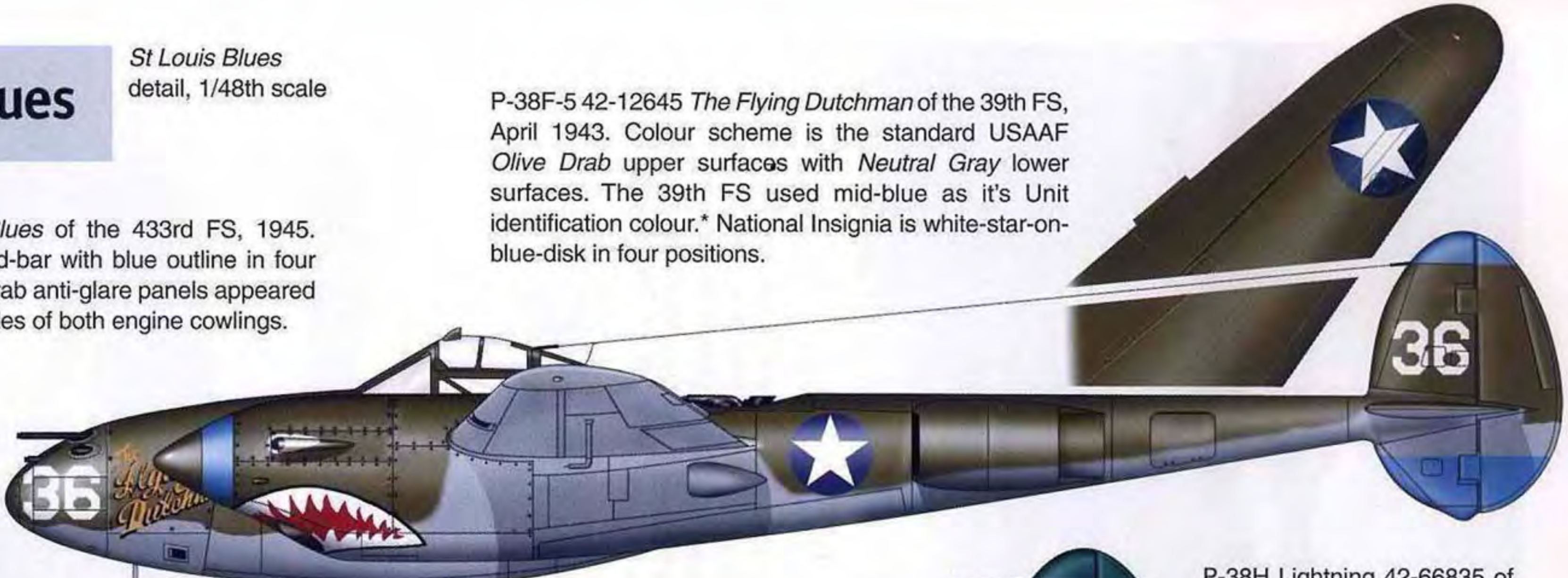
St Louis Blues
detail, 1/48th scale

See back cover.

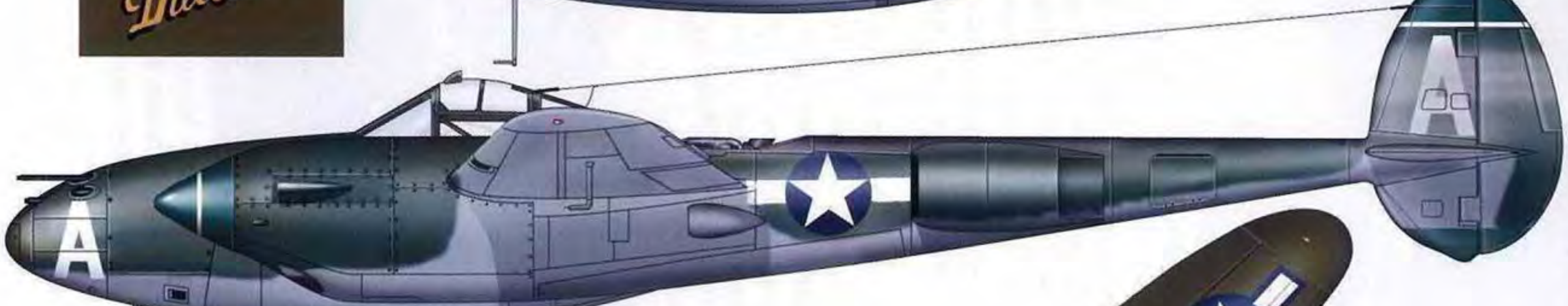
P-38 Lightning *St Louis Blues* of the 433rd FS, 1945. National Insignia is star-and-bar with blue outline in four positions. Note that Olive Drab anti-glare panels appeared on the nose and inboard sides of both engine cowlings.

P-38F-5 42-12645 *The Flying Dutchman* of the 39th FS, April 1943. Colour scheme is the standard USAAF *Olive Drab* upper surfaces with *Neutral Gray* lower surfaces. The 39th FS used mid-blue as it's Unit identification colour.* National Insignia is white-star-on-blue-disk in four positions.

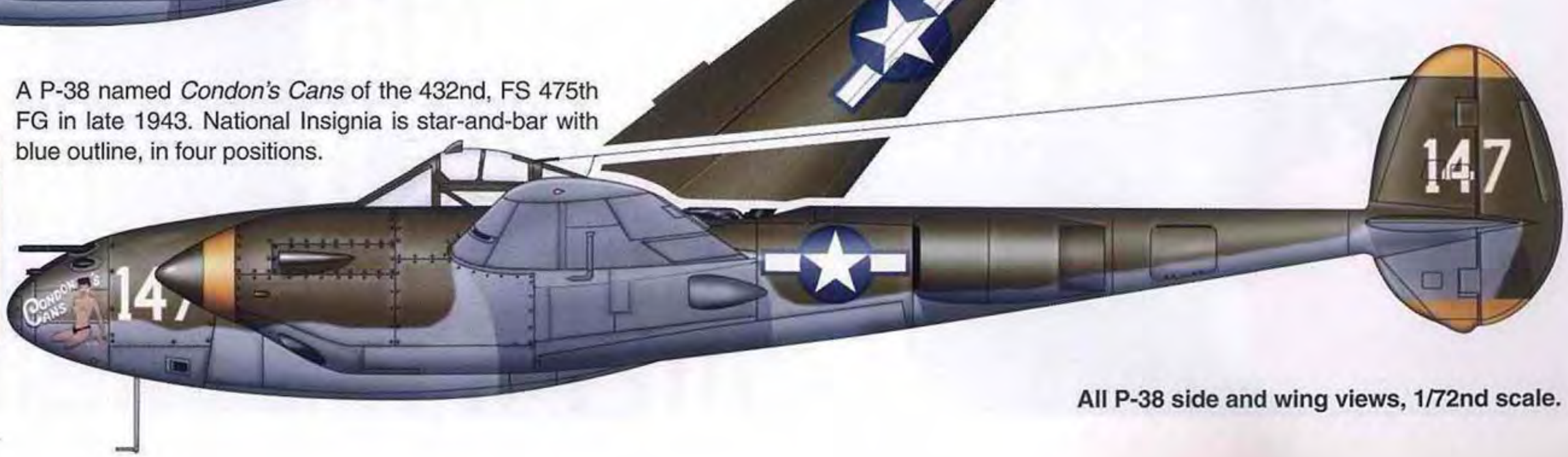


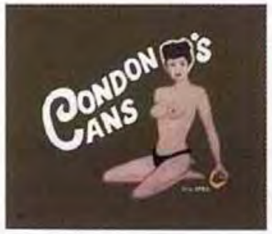


P-38H Lightning 42-66835 of the 80th FS, 8th FG, November 1943. Note the heavy over-spray of *Medium Green* on the aircraft's upper surfaces and the mid-1943 Pacific Theatre interim style National Insignia of star-and-bar with no blue outline, in four positions.



A P-38 named *Condon's Cans* of the 432nd, FS 475th FG in late 1943. National Insignia is star-and-bar with blue outline, in four positions.





Condon's Cans
detail, 1/48th scale

All P-38 side and wing views, 1/72nd scale.

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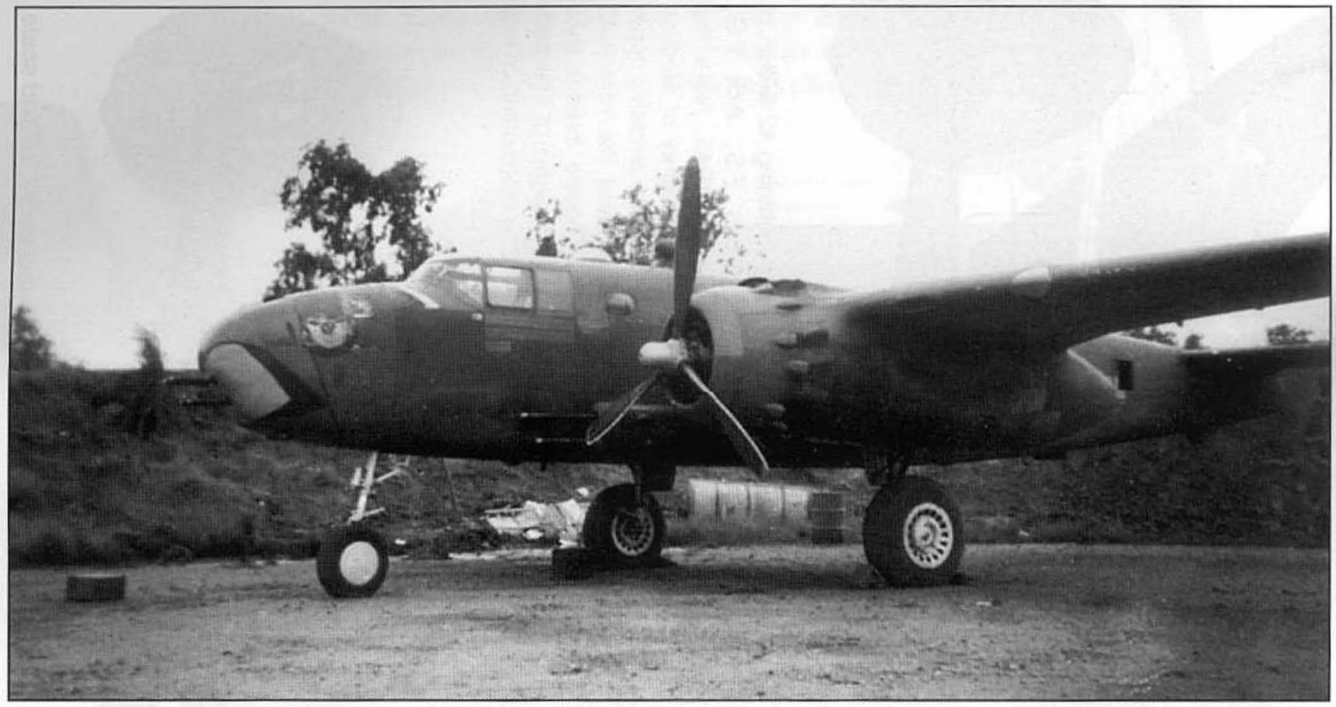
* Stafford G. B.



B-25 41-30094 *Hellzapoppin** which was ditched Off Rapopo airfield by Orbry H. Moore after its part in the raid of 2 November 1943. At least some of the crew were captured, and their eventual fate remains contentious to this day. (M. Claringbould)

neutralize the cruisers guns and attract their fire, Major Wilkins went in for a strafing run. His damaged stabilizer was completely shot off. To avoid swerving into his wing planes, he had to turn so as to expose the belly and full wing surfaces of his plane to enemy fire; it caught and crumpled his left wing. Now past control, the bomber crashed into the sea. In this fierce engagement, Major Wilkins destroyed two enemy vessels, and his heroic self-sacrifice made possible the safe withdrawal of the remaining planes of his squadron."

Another B-25, piloted by 1st/Lt W. Mackey also fell victim to the flak guns of the Japanese cruisers.

On the 71st BS's bombing run, all eight B-25s were hit, some seriously. One disappeared without trace, a second was seen to crash into the harbour and a third crashed on the return flight.

The 405th BS was attacked by a dozen Zekes, but the Japanese pilots, no doubt tired by the length and fierceness of the air battle, did not press home their attacks. Two were shot down by the B-25s and one bomber failed to return home.

THE SURVIVORS HEAD HOME

Beginning at 1pm, the attack ended just fifty minutes later. For the majority of aircrews the hardest part was over, but for others more drama lay in store. Major J.P. Henebry's damaged aircraft was now surrounded by other B-25s from his Group who were intent on shepherding him home. Despite the efforts of Henebry and his co-pilot, *Notre Dame de Victoire* was becoming increasingly difficult to control and kept losing altitude. Finally, Henebry was forced to ditch in the sea off Kiriwina where the whole crew were rescued by an Australian Catalina.

At Dobodura the runways were littered with P-38s and B-25s, which had landed wherever they could - many of them damaged beyond repair. Those returning relatively undamaged encountered some difficulty in finding a clear landing space. Many of the P-38s, low in fuel, were forced to land at Kiriwina. Marion Kirby was one such pilot and was happy to find six of his nine comrades from the 431st FS already there.

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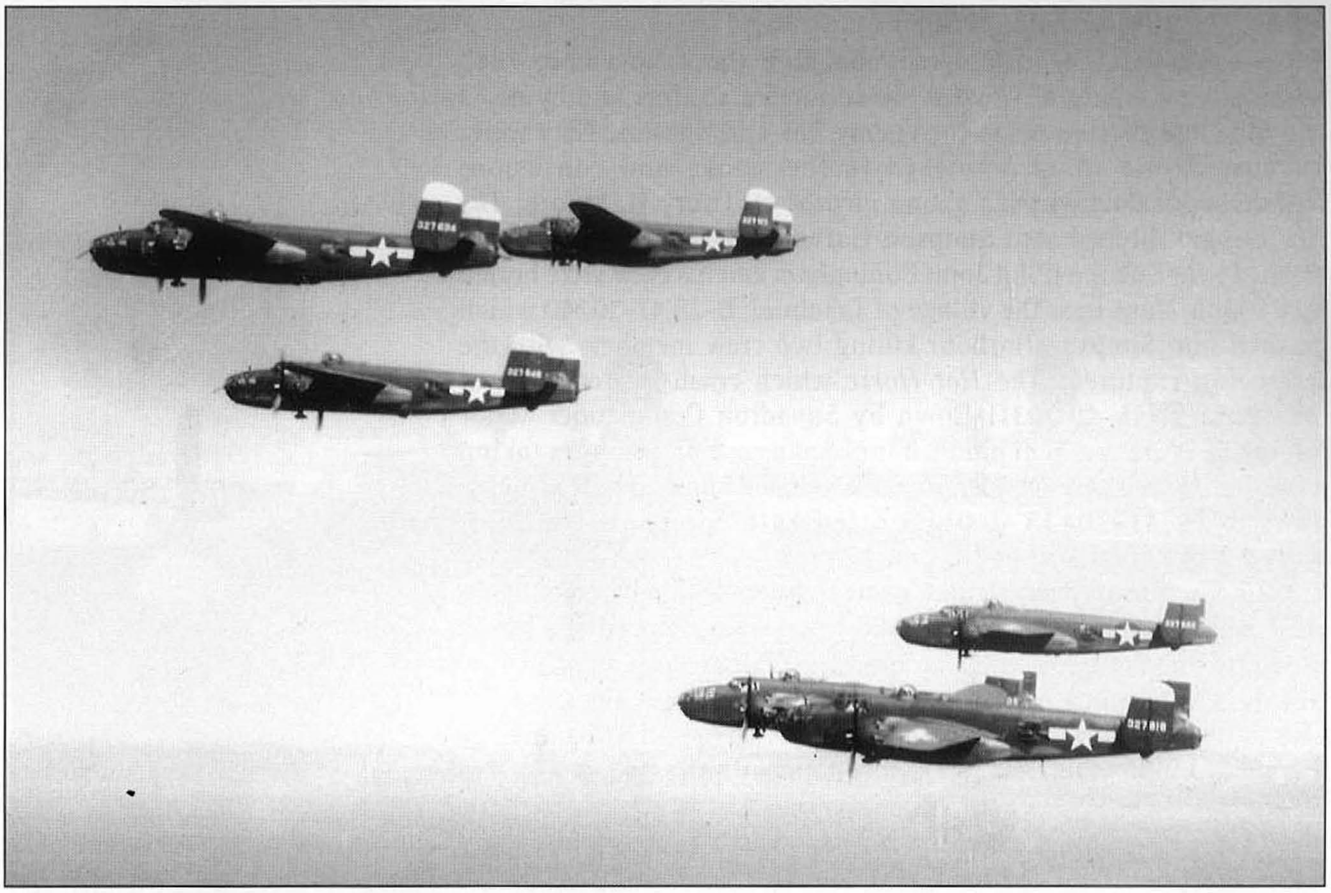
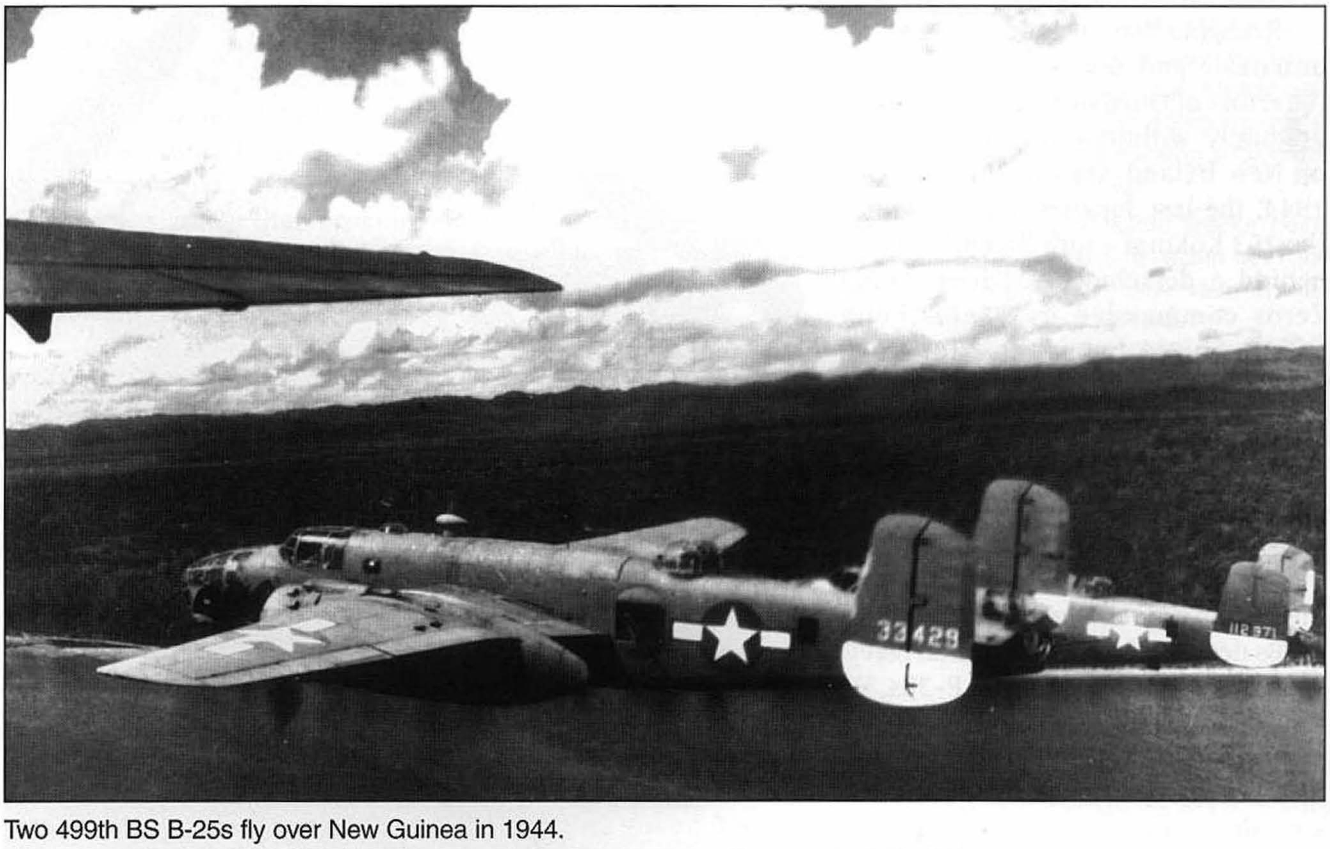
* There were eventually three B-25s to wear the name *Hellzapoppin*, another of which was assigned to the 13BS on 26 Apr 42 and saw out its service - not lost on operations.



B-25 Mitchells of the 71st Bomb Squadron on the way to Rabaul.
(M. Claringbould)



Two 499th BS B-25s fly over New Guinea in 1944.

The nearest is B-25D-30 43-3429 which was lost during a raid on Dagua on 21 May 1944. The second aircraft is *Dirty Dora* which survived a full years operational service in the southwest Pacific and was struck off charge in August 1944. (Aero Journal)

WAS IT WORTH THE LOSSES?

The 5th Air Force B-25 Mitchells that flew the 2 November 1943 mission were nearly all Townsville-converted strafers and by day's end nine had succumbed to the enemy flak and fighters. They were: *Tugboat Annie* which vanished in the smoke and confusion; *Hellzapoppin* ditched Off Rapopo airfield by Orbry H. Moore; *The Nip Clipper* ditched into Simpson Harbour; B-25 41-30213 which crashed near Kokopo (Pilot John Cuningham and his crew were buried by Catholic Nuns near the village of Takabuo); B-25 41-30240 which crashed into Simpson Harbour killing two crew members with the rest being captured; *The Hot Horse* which crash-landed back at Dobodura; B-25 41-30311 flown by Squadron Commander Major Raymond Wilkins which plunged into Simpson Harbour after taking a flak hit; *Notre Dame De Victoire* ditched half a kilometre off Kiriwina and; B-25 41-30433 disintegrated into Simpson Harbour, killing 2/Lt Robert Fox and his entire crew.

'Bloody Tuesday' was a day on which the Mitchells were badly punished by Rabaul's defences. The costly raid reduced the threat posed by Rabaul, but it was not entirely eliminated - underlined by further 5th AF raids on 5, 7 and 11 November 1943. The US Navy also chipped in with heavy bombardments of the airstrips and the anchorage following the arrival of another flotilla of cruisers and destroyers.

After the last attack on the 11th, the Japanese presence at Rabaul no longer posed any serious threat to Allied activities in the area. Even so, contrary to the hopes General Kenney had nurtured, the Japanese still hung on and yet again the pros and cons of air power as a war-winning weapon were revealed.

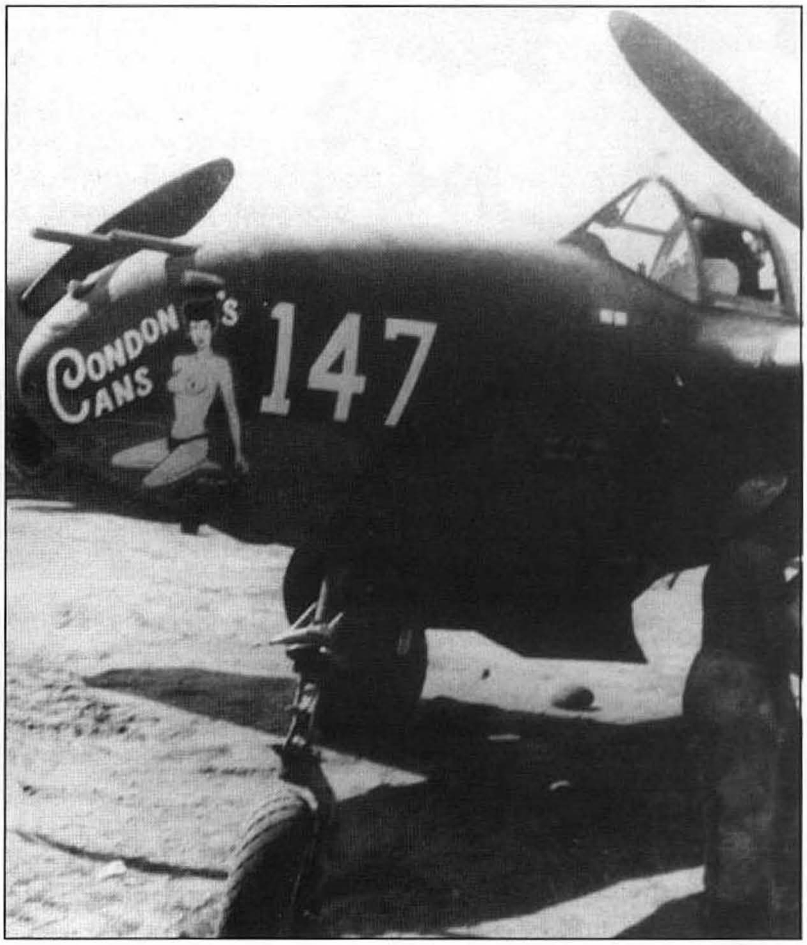
Realizing that Rabaul was becoming untenable and not wishing to repeat the errors of Guadalcanal, the Japanese gradually withdrew towards Kavieng on New Ireland. On the 20th January 1944, the last Japanese fighter unit - the 253 Kokutai - quit Rabaul, but left behind a detachment of nine A6M3 Zeros commanded by Senior Petty Officer Shigeo Fukumoto. This small force engaged the Allied air forces up until the last day of the war.

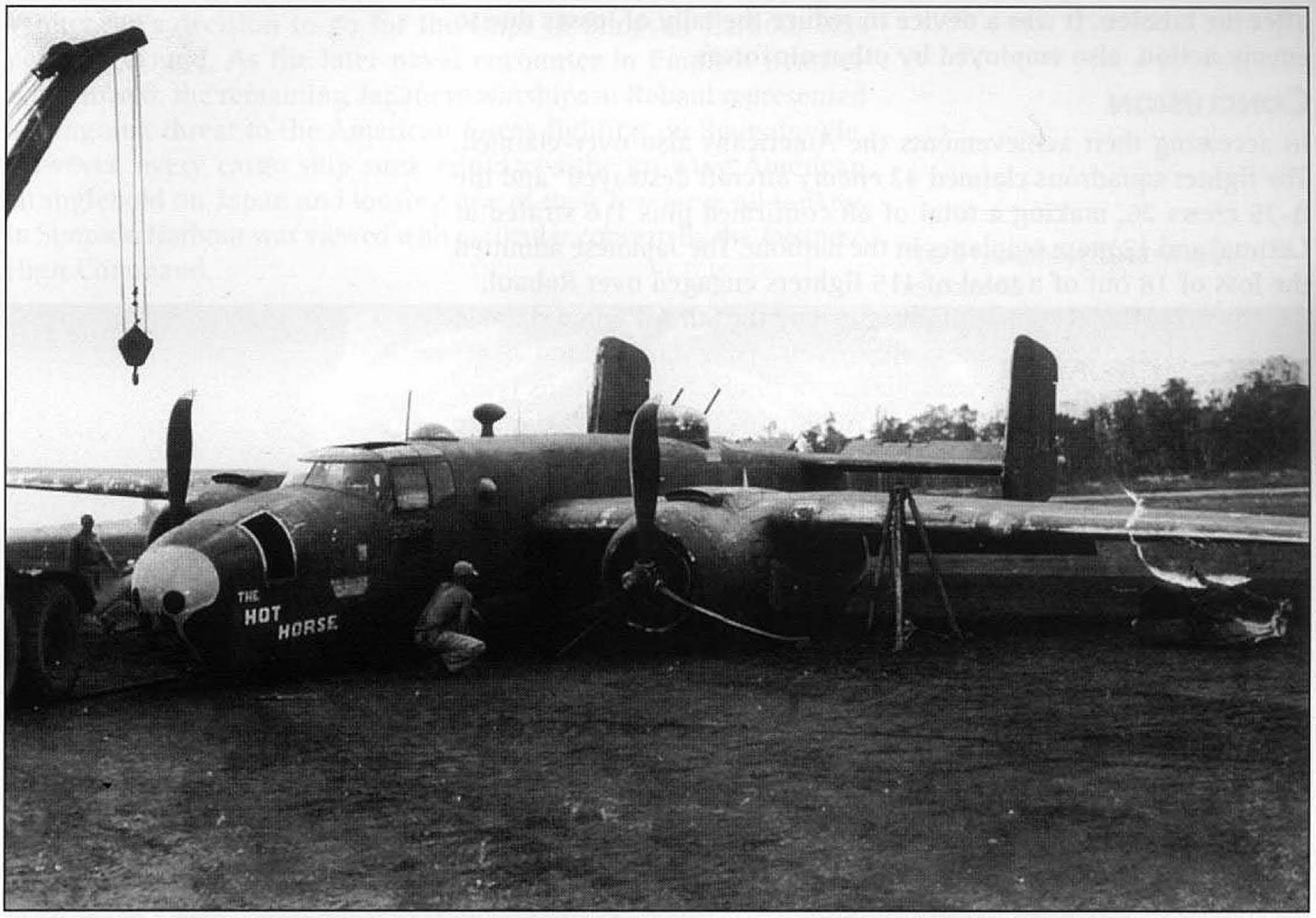
CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS

As had happened before, the Japanese leadership was swept along by their pilots inflated victory claims. The Imperial Army claimed 13 B-25s & 10 P-38s destroyed and the Imperial Navy, 35 B-25s (and B-26s!) & 85 P-38s. By the time these figures were relayed up the line to Tokyo they were further inflated to a grand total of 200 enemy aircraft destroyed!

It was well known that the Japanese general staff liked to receive the news it wanted to hear, but even they must

Captain Henry L. Condon flew this P-38 with the 432nd FS in late 1943. Note the two kill markings beneath the windscreen and pilot & crew Chief names near the camouflage demarcation line. (M. Claringbould)





have thought this claim was exaggerated because the figures were modified to more sensible proportions – 119 confirmed kills and 22 probables.

Although the attack took place over territory under their control, Japanese commanders in Rabaul were not interested in accurately recording Allied losses because this was counter-productive from their perspective. Their masters back in Japan tended to criticise poor results, rather than provide improved resources to counter future attacks. It would not have been a difficult task to count the crash sites on the ground and aerial reconnaissance could have been used to help make a better estimate, but this was not done.

This tendency to accept inflated claims without question from the front line was to lead the Japanese High Command into a number of disastrous encounters, due to a lack of information on the real potential of America's military forces. One such occasion was the Battle of Midway during Operation I-Go. Admiral Yamamoto, so highly praised for his grasp of naval strategy, frequently made mistakes by failing to question the information he was receiving.

The true extent of American losses were 9 B-25s and 10 P-38s.* Set against the Japanese claim, the total seems derisory but those 19 aircraft represent 13% of the total force – certainly not an acceptable loss rate. Even so, this raid on Rabaul was not the most costly of the war and true losses incurred on 2 November 1943 have proved difficult to establish.

A good number of the B-25s and P-38s that got back to Kiriwina and Dobodura were repaired and flew again. Others served as a source of spare parts and were struck off charge several months after the mission. This makes it difficult to determine their true condition

B-25D 41-30274 *The Hot Horse* was assigned to the 13th BS of the 3rd BG and participated in the Rabaul raid of 2 November 1943. It crash-landed at Dobodura after the raid, riddled with bullet holes and with a failed hydraulic system. Note the missing alloy panel above the word 'Hot'.

The Hot Horse spent weeks being repaired and did fly again with the 13th BS. Some time later it was transferred to 345th BG.

(M. Claringbould)

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* The official communiques list 8 B-25s and 9 P-38s lost plus 45 crew members KIA or MIA. In adding up the losses reported by each individual unit engaged in the raid, each total is increased by one. The author has found no explanation for the difference.

after the mission. It was a device to reduce the tally of losses due to enemy action, also employed by other air forces.

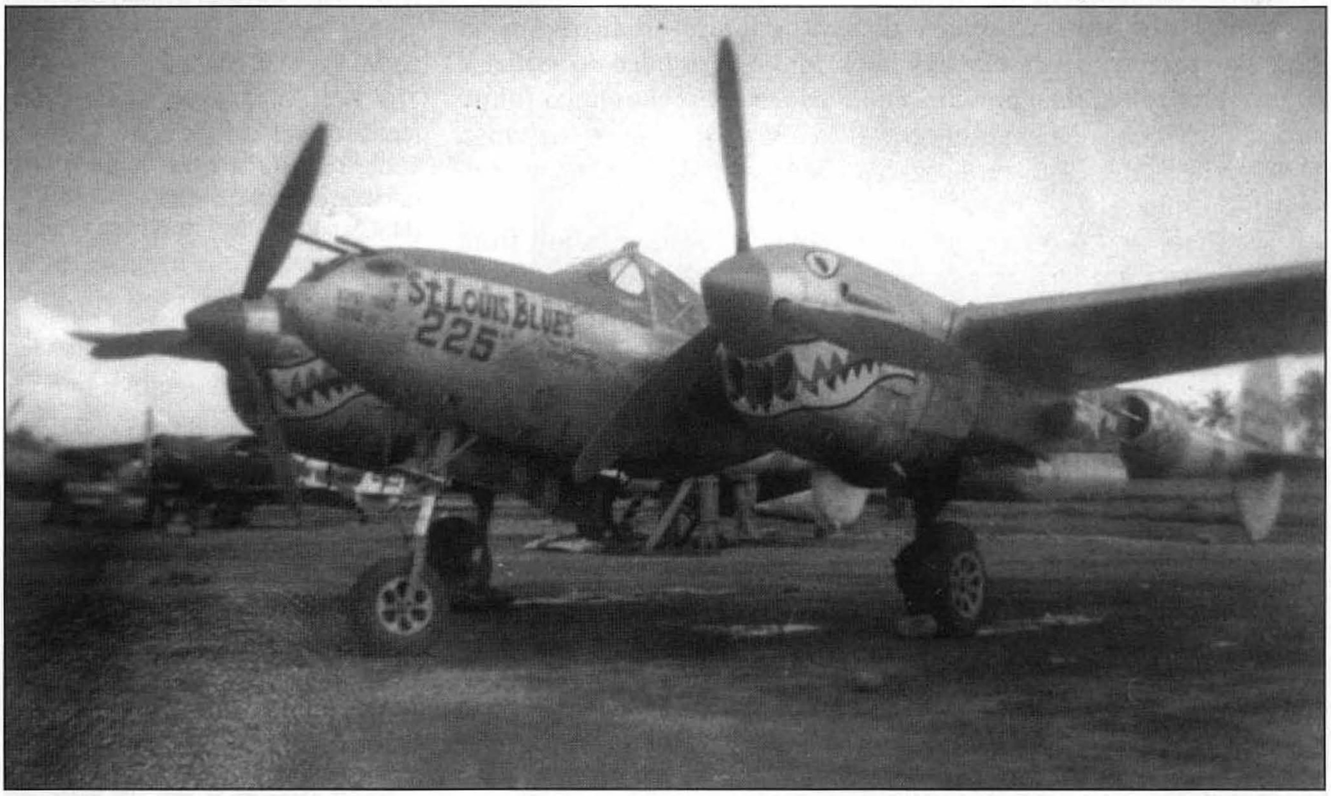
CONCLUSION

In accessing their achievements the Americans also over-claimed. The fighter squadrons claimed 42 enemy aircraft destroyed* and the B-25 crews 26, making a total of 68 confirmed plus 116 strafed at Lakunai and 12 more seaplanes in the harbour. The Japanese admitted the loss of 18 out of a total of 115 fighters engaged over Rabaul.

The first official communique issued by the 5th Air Force claimed the sinking of three Japanese destroyers, eight large cargo boats and four smaller naval vessels making a total of 50,000 tons lying on the bottom of Simpson Harbour. Add to this the extensive damage inflicted on two heavy cruisers, two destroyers, two tankers and eight merchantmen. Later the figure for the tonnage sunk was revised downwards to 13,000 tons. The photos brought back by the 8th PS on 3 November showed ten vessels still burning or leaking fuel oil. After the war the true extent of the Japanese shipping losses following the Rabaul raid was assessed at; one tanker of 10,000 tons, three merchantmen totalling 8,000 tons, a mine sweeper and three small coastal vessels.

It is important to remember that the 2nd of November mission to Rabaul took place some three weeks after the slaughter of the Schweinfurt raid over Europe, in which the 8th Air Force lost 19% of the aircraft dispatched. In Europe the USAAF realised that their original strategic bombing concept did not accord with the realities of modern air war. Even in tight defensive formations bombers could not beat off a large determined force of fighters.

In the Southwest Pacific there was no plan for a strategic bombing campaign; the missions planned by General Kenney were mainly tactical and aimed at halting Japanese merchant shipping. General



Lockheed P-38 Lightning 42-104391 *St Louis Blues* of 433rd FS, 475th FG later in the war. Note the Beech 17 visible behind. (E. Fietz)

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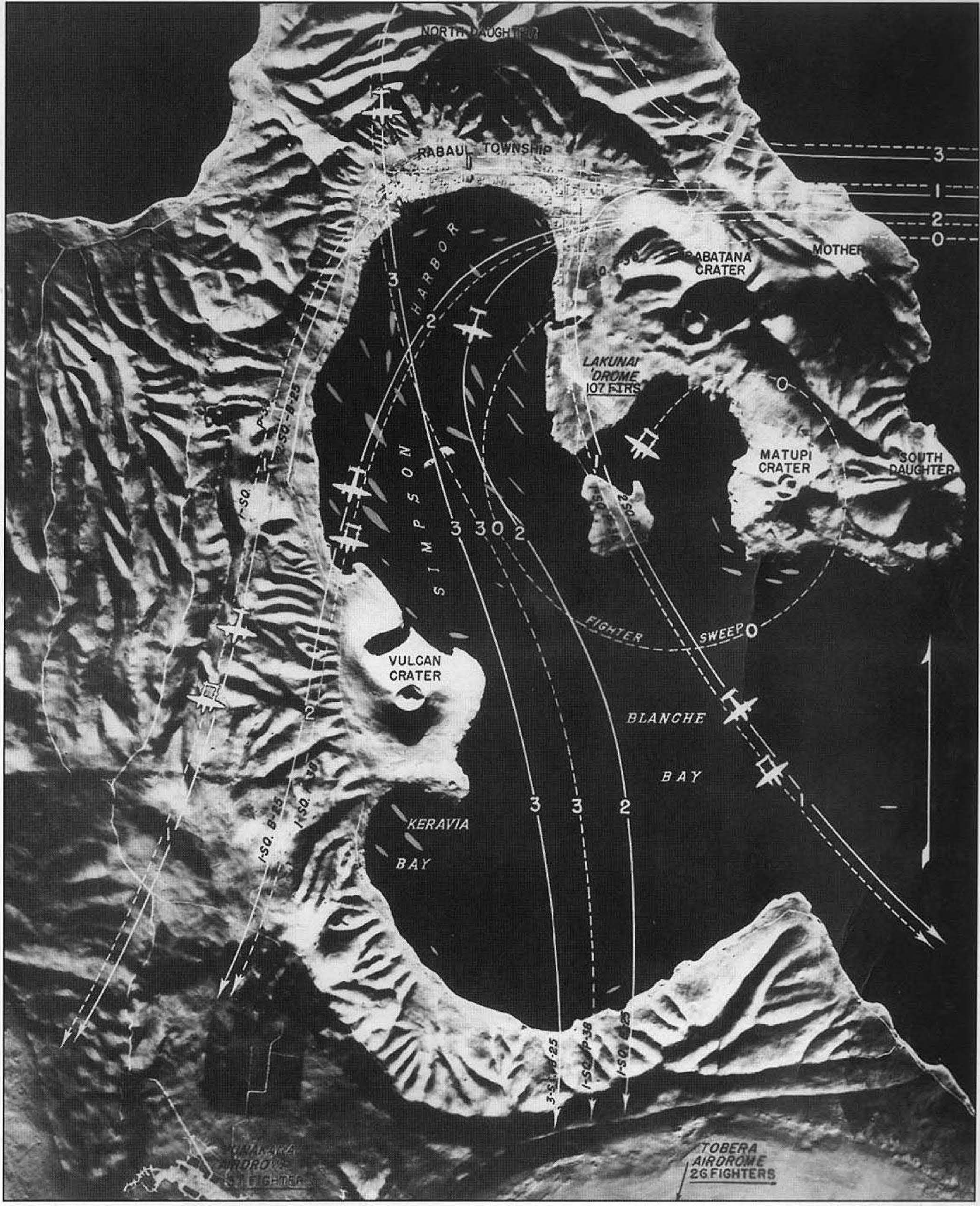
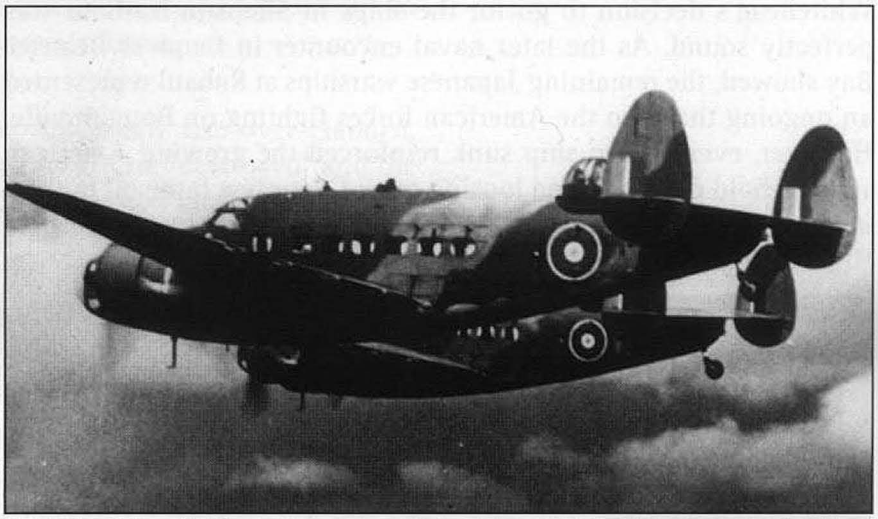
* The Army Air Force in WW2, Vil IV.

Whitehead's decision to go for the ships in Simpson Harbour was perfectly sound. As the later naval encounter in Empress Beatrice Bay showed, the remaining Japanese warships at Rabaul represented an ongoing threat to the American forces fighting on Bougainville. However, every cargo ship sunk reinforced the growing American stranglehold on Japan and loosing one of their few large oil tankers in Simpson Harbour was viewed with particular concern by the Japanese High Command.

The 2 November 1943 Mission, as planned.


NORTH DAUGHTER
RABAUL TOWNSHIP
SIMPSON HARBOR
RABATANA CRATER
MOTHER
LAKUNAI DROME 107 FTRS
MATUPI CRATER
SOUTH DAUGHTER
VULCAN CRATER
FIGHTER SWEEP
BLANCHE BAY
KERAVIA BAY
TOBERA AIRDROME 26 FIGHTERS
3
1
2
0
3 3 0 2
3 3 2
1-SQ. B-25
3-SQ. B-25
1-SQ. P-38
1-SQ. B-25

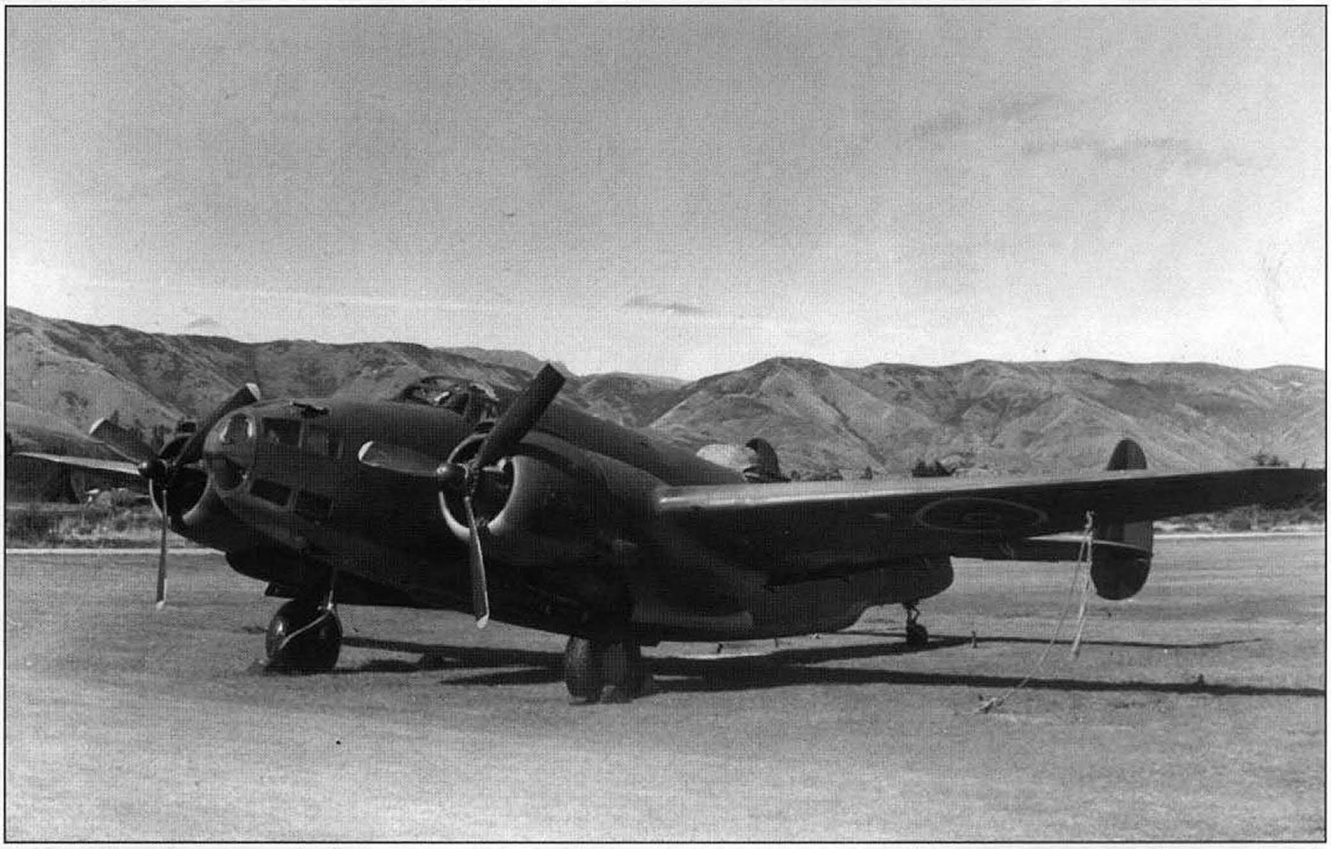
PACIFIC VENTURAS



No.3 Squadron Hudsons over Guadalcanal in early 1943, before the fuselage roundels gained blue centres. Wing roundels are already Blue/White/Blue above and below. This would appear to match the *Insignia Blue* of the markings as supplied. Camouflage is (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Foliage Green.* Undersides would most likely be (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue,* or possibly (NZ) *Sky Grey.* No.3 operated RB-34s for a short period before reverting to the trusty Hudson. F/O McCormick piloting a Hudson, achieved the RNZAF's first 'kill' in the Pacific when he caught a Japanese floatplane by surprise and shot it down, into the sea on 3 April 1943.** (J. Regan)

The RNZAF had hoped to re-equip its Bomber Reconnaissance units operating Lockheed Hudsons in the Pacific with North American B-25 Mitchells, but this was not to be. By 1943, the RNZAF's Lend Lease allocations for operational aircraft were coming from US Navy sources, so Venturas were delivered instead. While reckoned to be a formidable weapon, the 'hot' Ventura came as something of a shock to pilots accustomed to the docile Hudson causing a number of training accidents. Its introduction was anything but smooth and on one occasion the whole RNZAF Ventura fleet was grounded.

A total of 116 PV-1 Venturas, 23 RB-34 Venturas* and 4 PV-2 Harpoons were obtained by the RNZAF from 1943 to 1945. The



RB-34 NZ4600 of the RNZAFs Technical Training School, Nelson 1944. It almost certainly wears an RNZAF re-paint scheme of (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Dark Slate Grey* upper surfaces with (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue* lower surfaces. The machine has Blue/White/Blue roundels with yellow rings to all six roundels and the rare Blue/White/Blue fin flashes. The B-34s could be distinguished from PV-1s by their nose section with four windows each side and the teardrop 'bubbles' in the cockpit side windows. NZ4600 is now the sole surviving ex-RNZAF Ventura and is on display at the Museum of Transport and Technology, Auckland. (J. Regan)

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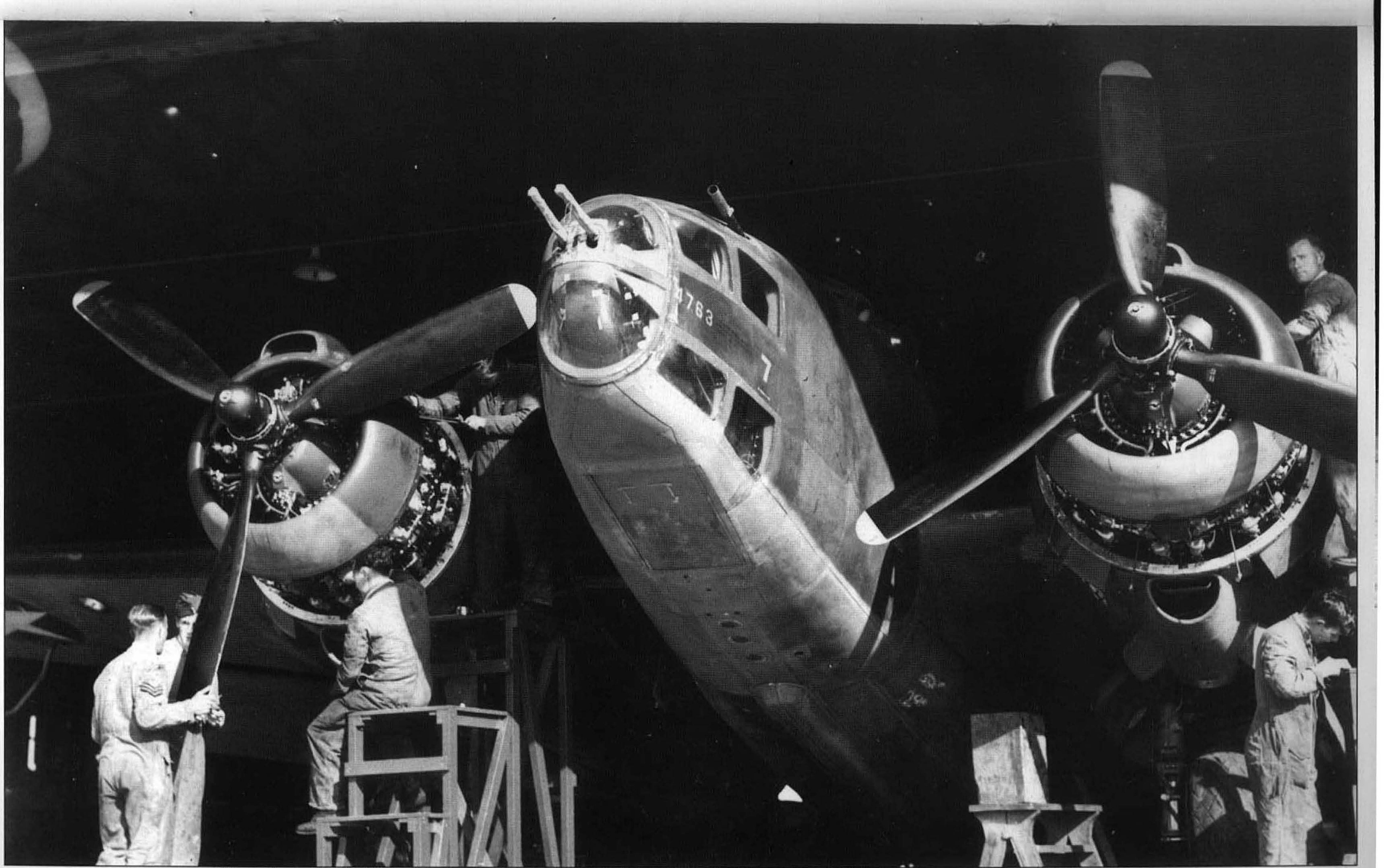
* U.S. Army Air Corps B-34 Lexingtons were referred to as Venturas by the RAF, RAAF and RNZAF.

** A. Horn



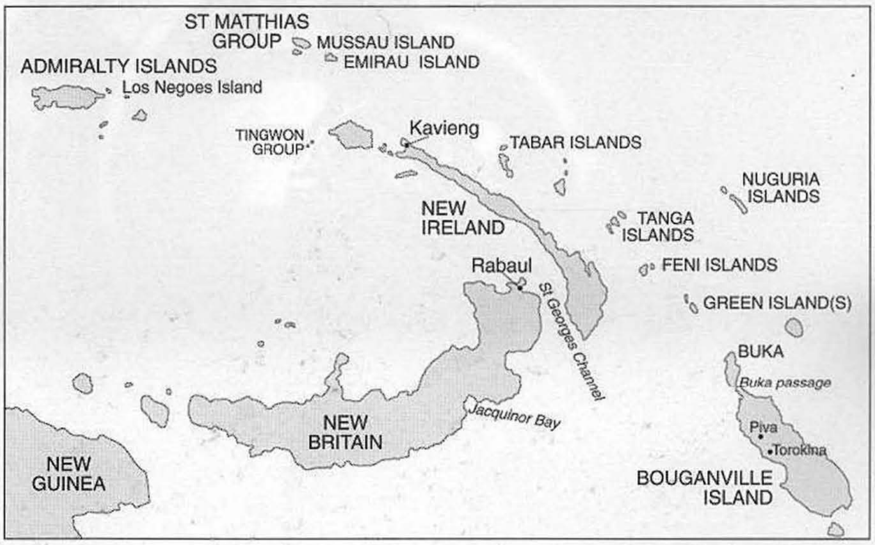
The 1944 caption for this picture reads, 'Hobsonville, First Ventura'. It shows RB-34 Constructors Number 4763 which subsequently became NZ4589. This B-34 is in the delivery scheme of *Dark Earth* and *Olive Drab* (substituted for RAF *Dark Green*) above, with *Sky* undersides. Note US insignia still under the starboard wing. (Whites Aviation via Robert E. Montgomery collection)

PV-1s were allotted the serial numbers NZ4501 to 4582 and NZ4606 to 4639, the RB-34s NZ4583 to NZ4605 and the PV-2s NZ4701 to NZ4704.

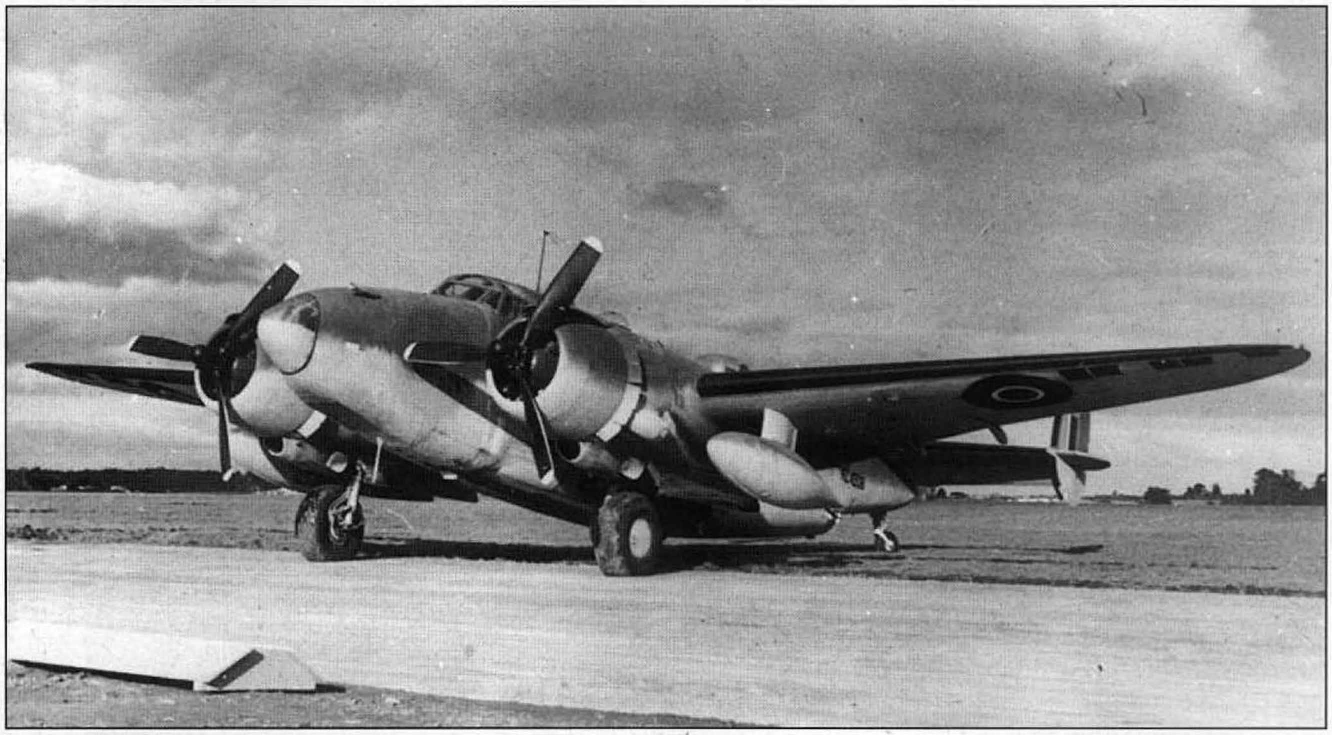
RB-34 VENTURAS

Twenty-three Vega-built RB-34s were shipped to New Zealand to be used for operational training purposes; most arrived in June 1943 but the final two were not received until December of that year. They were from a British-specification production batch of 200 Ventura Mk IIA's (FD568-767), a number of which were diverted to the USAAF by whom they were known as the RB-34 Lexington.

Although the USAAC ordered such improvements as fitting an electric Martin upper turret and .50, rather than .303 nose guns, these British Venturas were of limited use to the USAAF (hence their 'R-Restricted' prefix). Still, they filled a gap in maritime patrol and operational training at a time of great need; at least some of these are understood to have been pressed into service with Alaska-based units within the USAAF's Sea Search scheme.


ST MATTHIAS GROUP
MUSSAU ISLAND
EMIRAU ISLAND
ADMIRALTY ISLANDS
Los Negoes Island
TINGWON GROUP
Kavieng
TABAR ISLANDS
NUGURIA ISLANDS
NEW IRELAND
TANGA ISLANDS
Rabaul
FENI ISLANDS
St Georges Channel
GREEN ISLAND(S)
BUKA
Buka passage
Jacquinor Bay
NEW BRITAIN
Piva
Torokina
NEW GUINEA
BOUGANVILLE ISLAND

The main RNZAF operational area in the South-West Pacific, 1944-45.



Ventura NZ4508 newly arrived at Whenuapai, June 1943. As one of the first nine PV-1's received, it wears the US Navy *Blue Gray* upper surfaces and *Light Gray* lower surfaces scheme and has RAF style roundels in six positions. Note the slightly darker shades where the as-manufactured US cocarde has been painted over on the forward fuselage.

NZ4508 became the first RNZAF Ventura lost in the operational area when it crashed into the sea after leaving Henderson Field at 5.30AM with F/O C. K. Harney at the controls. All aboard were lost except for Radio Operator/Air Gunner F/Sgt Hair who was standing beside the pilot when they apparently hit the water in a diving turn in the pre-dawn darkness. Hair was thrown through the canopy, but stumbled around in the dark, found a life jacket and spent 12 hours in the water before being rescued.* (J. Regan)

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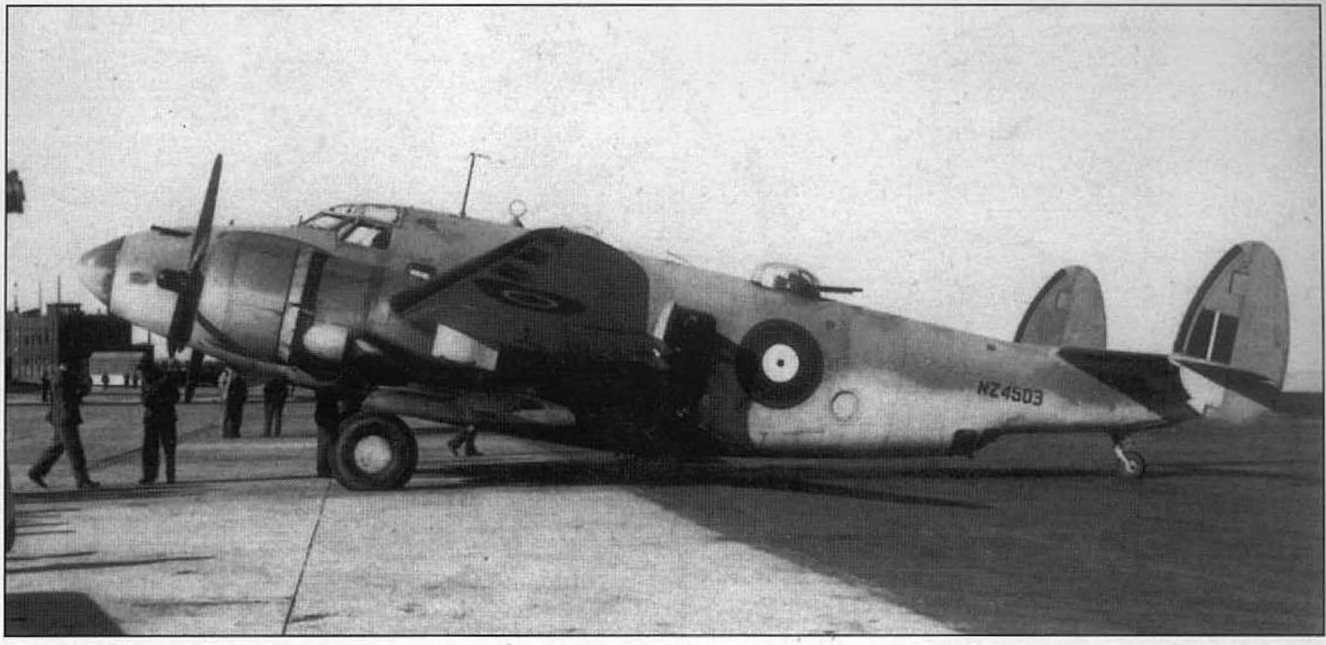
* Horn.



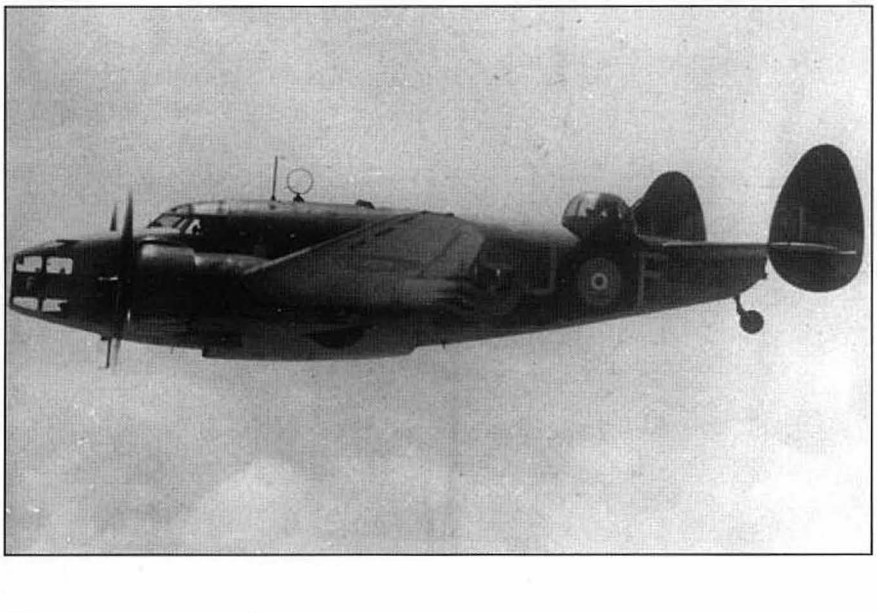
NZ4503, one of the first PV-1's to arrive was assigned to No.1 (BR) Squadron, Whenuapai, June 1943. It's colour scheme is the US Navy 'two-tone' scheme of *Blue Gray* upper surfaces with *Light Gray* lower surfaces.

Note wide RAF style 24" by 24" fin flash and the small red centre to fuselage roundel. NZ4503 appears to have RAF type 'C' roundel in the under wing position. These markings were short lived with the RNZAF blue-white-blue roundels appearing at this time. The black rubber de-icing boots were soon removed from the Venturas wing leading edges – they were superfluous in the South Pacific! (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

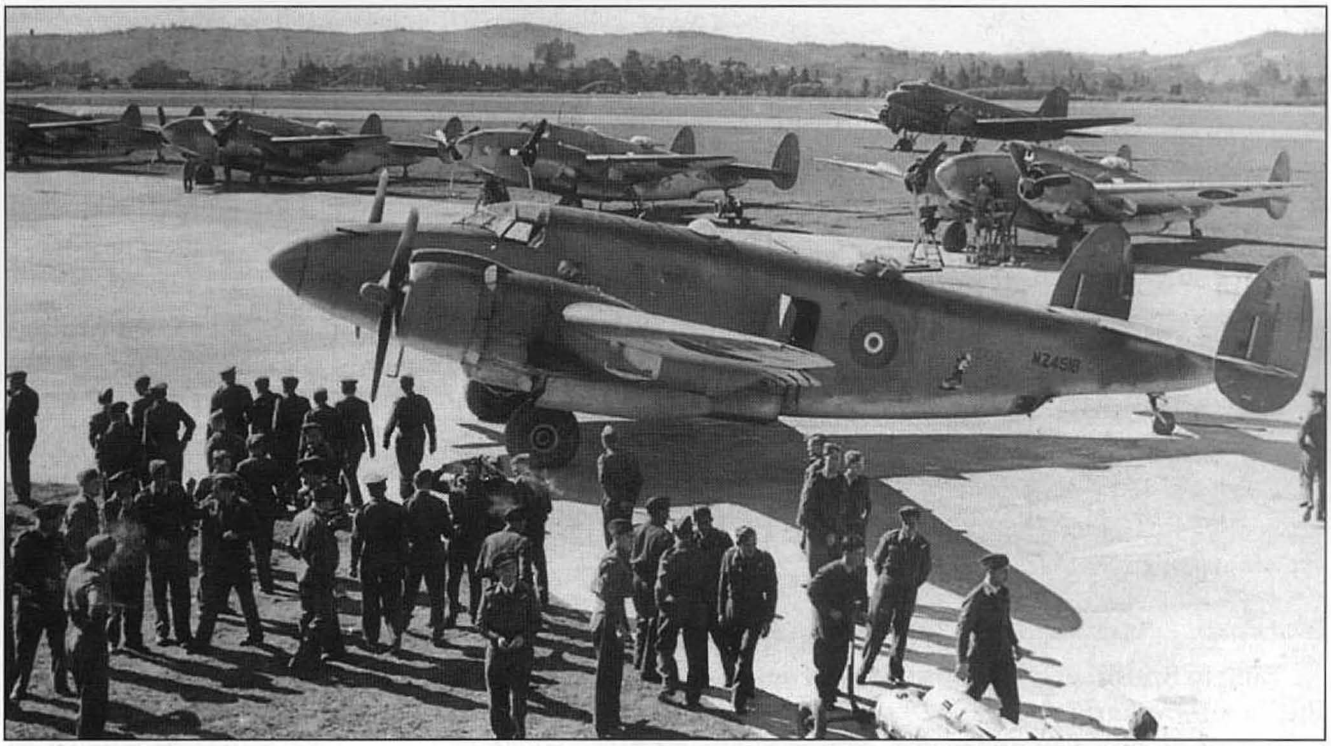
Built to British specifications these aircraft came off the production line in a *Dark Earth* and *Olive Drab* (the accepted substitute for RAF *Dark Green*) with *Sky* undersides. Photographic evidence suggests that this scheme was retained in service with the USAAF and RB-34s were received by the RNZAF in these colours. However it is possible that some may have arrived in New Zealand wearing the standard USAAC *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Gray* camouflage.

The RNZAF prepared some RB-34s for service in Fiji by cannibalizing others for parts. By late 1943 Fiji was far from the front line, though still an important defence base. Nine RB-34s were sent to replace the Hudsons of No.4 (BR) Squadron, then based at Nausori, Fiji, but they proved unsuitable and the squadron continued to operate its Hudsons well into 1944. The RB-34s were soon returned to New Zealand and continued to serve at the Bomber Wing, Whenuapai and No.1 (Bomber) OTU, Ohakea, until more PV-1s became available. The RNZAF never considered using the RB-34s in an operational area and none remained flying by the end of the war.

Contrary to post war legend, the B-34s shipped to New Zealand had never served with the RAF in North Africa!



With the arrival of the PV-1 Ventura, the Hudson was quickly dropped back to training and support roles. Hudson Mk III NZ2035 'SJ-F' served with 1 Squadron in New Zealand, June 1943. It has been repainted in *Blue Gray* and (NZ) *Dark Slate Grey* upper surfaces (there was very little difference between locally-manufactured Light and Dark Slate Grey) with (NZ) *Sky Grey* under surfaces and code letters. It has quite oxidised (NZ) *Matt Blue*, Blue/White/Blue roundels. The previous fuselage red centre dots tended to bleed through and give the darker impression seen here. Note the narrow fin-flashes on both inner and outer fin surfaces.
(J. Regan)



Ventura NZ4516 at Whenuapai. Note that the fuselage roundel has been repainted to a smaller size and the narrow style RNZAF fin flashes on inner and outer fin surfaces. The middle two aircraft in this photo are in the early US Navy 'two-tone' scheme. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

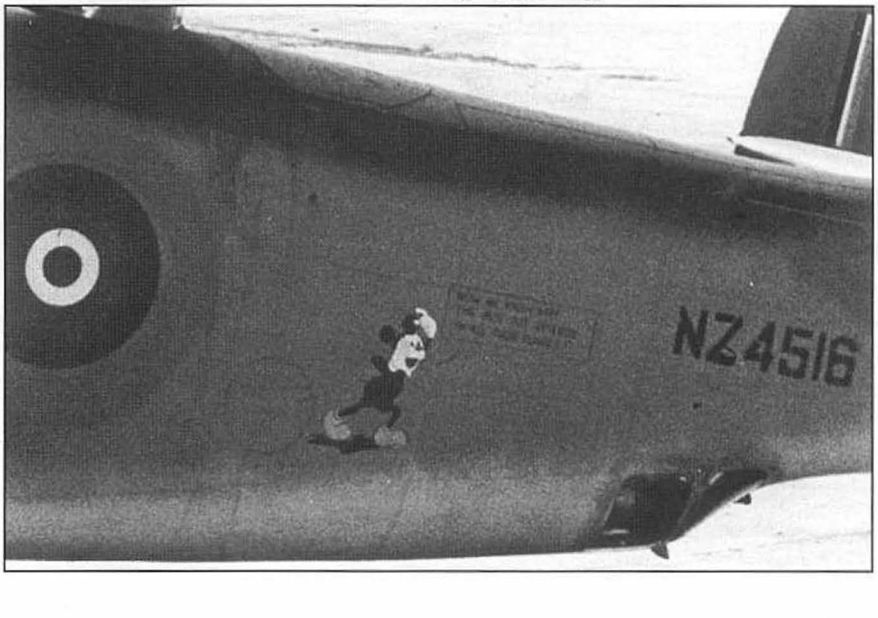
PV-1 DELIVERIES

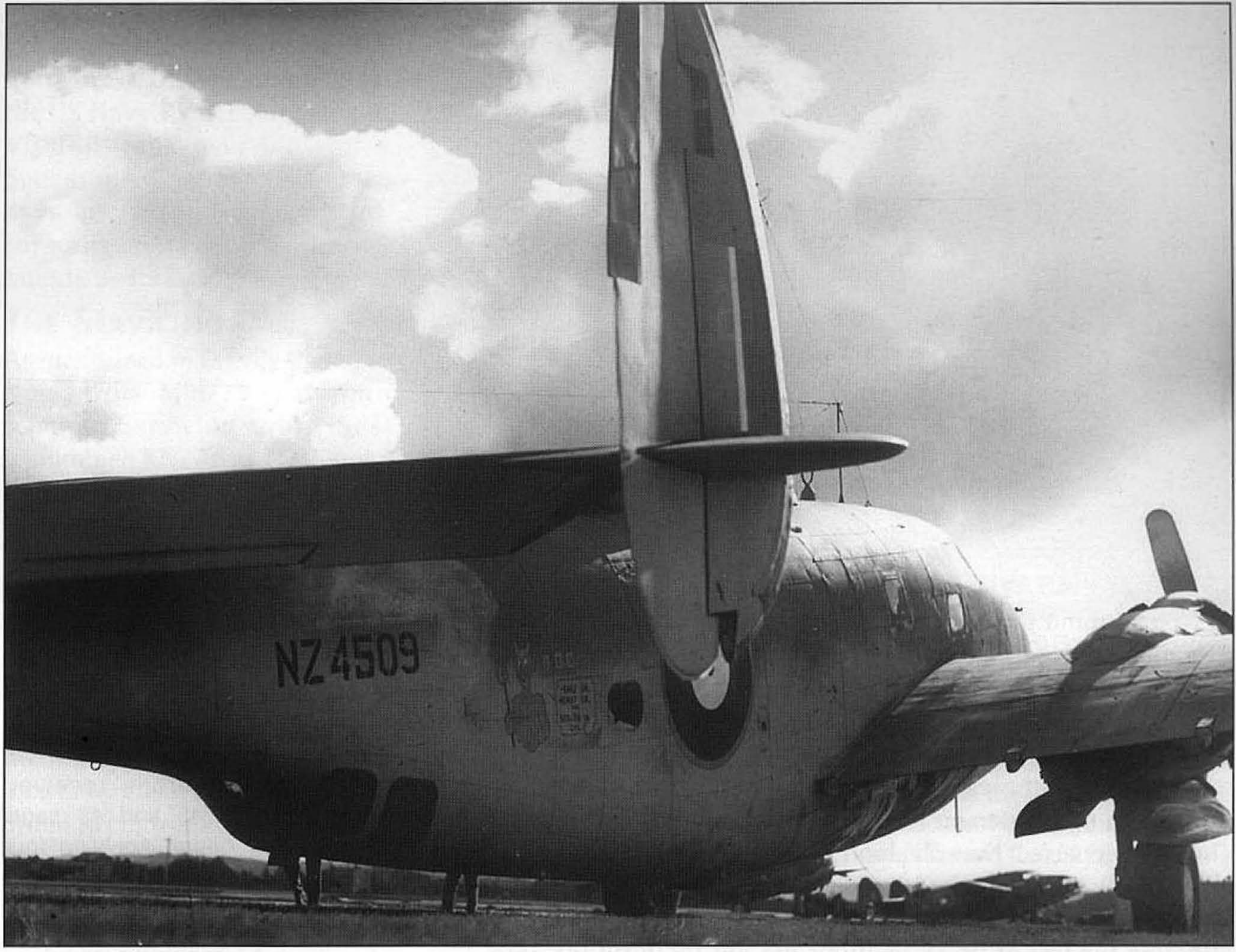
In April 1943 the RNZAF Pacific Ferry Flight was formed at Kaneohe Naval Air Station, Hawaii, to accept C-47 Dakotas, PBY Catalinas and PV-1 Venturas from the American government and ferry them to New Zealand (In September 1943 the Flight was reformed as a detachment of No.40 Squadron from Whenuapai, near Auckland – a simpler administrative arrangement).

The first nine PV-1 Venturas (NZ4501-4509) were handed over to the RNZAF at Ford Island Naval Air Station, Hawaii, on 7 June 1943. They were ferried across the Koolau Range to Kaneohe on the other end of the island where the Pacific Ferry Flight tested and prepared them for the flight south. On 26 June the first PV-1, NZ4505, arrived at Whenuapai with F/O Arnott at the controls.

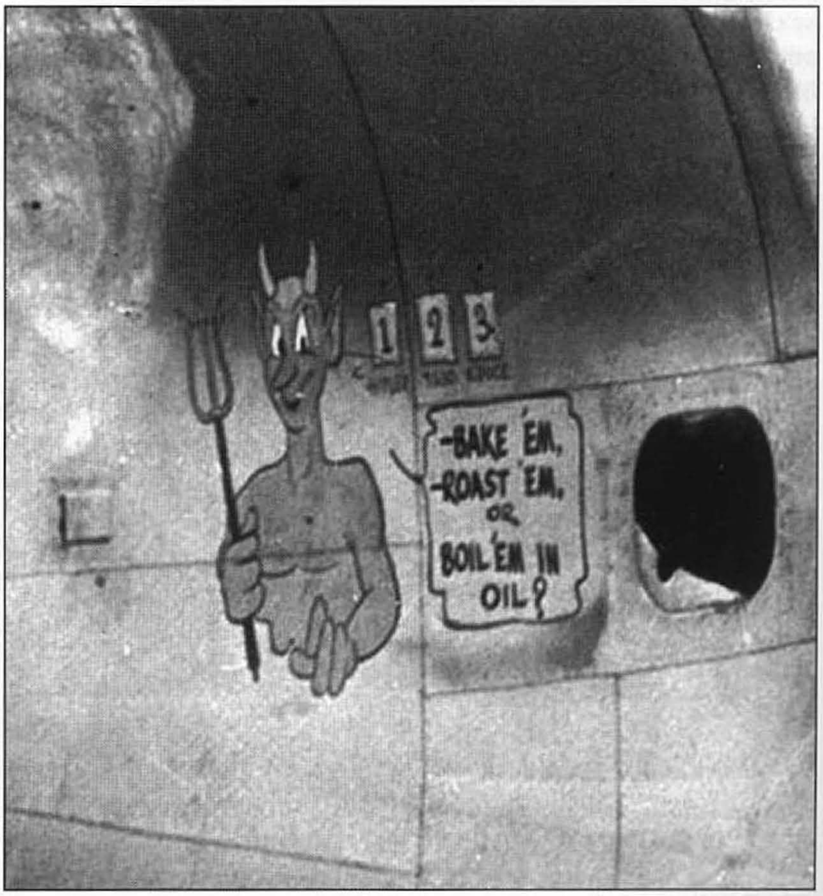
The most common ferry route was to Whenuapai via Kaneohe, Palmyra and Canton Island and took two to three days. These delivery flights sometimes doubled as performance tests; eg NZ4549 was flown, as closely as possible, at 30" supercharger boost and 2060 rpm to test fuel consumption with these settings. The delivery crews returned to Hawaii on any transport available - typically an RNZAF 40 Squadron C-47 or occasionally a US Naval Air Transport Service flying boat. During the entire Ventura acceptance and ferry programme only one was lost, NZ4547, which crashed at Kaneohe on New Year's Day 1944, after its delivery run from Ford Island.

A close up view of the 'Mickey Mouse' artwork on NZ4516. Caption reads, 'Now we know why the Axis put (Riceroe?) in all their planes !' Note how the orthochromatic film used has darkened the yellow ring of the roundel, and the darker (fresher) paint used to over-paint the US insignia. (P. Mossong)

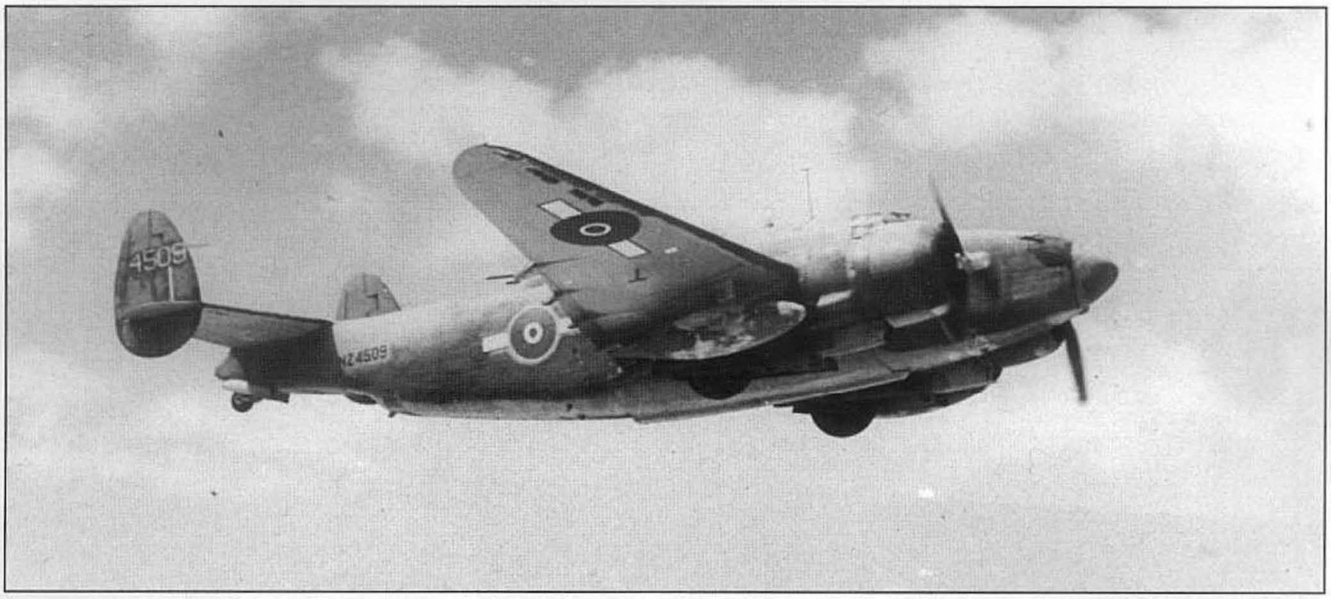




PV-1 Ventura NZ4509, as delivered by air to Whenuapai late June 1943. It was issued to No.1 (BR) Sqn (then at Whenuapai). By the time the Sqn moved overseas '09' was flown by P/O Ayson and his crew who reached Guadalcanal on 26 October 1943. After being damaged in the action of 24 December 1943 it was sent to No.4 Repair Depot, Espiritu Santo for repairs, then returned to Guadalcanal and Munda. At the time of its 320-hour inspection on 1 March 1944, it was being flown by No.2 (BR) Sqn. Transferred to Piva, Bougainville, in late April 1944 with No.2 Sqn it was flown back to New Zealand along with the 15 other No.10 SU's original PV-1s on 20/21 May 1944 (these being NZ4503-07, 09-16, '18, '21, '41). NZ4509 served out the rest of its career in NZ, firstly with No.11 SU at Gisborne and then with the Whenuapai Maintenance Wing from October 1944. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)



A close-up of NZ4509's artwork. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)



PV-1 Ventura NZ4509, partially repainted with (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* over the early US Navy *Blue Gray* and *Light Gray* delivery scheme. The serial number has been retained on the faded original US Navy *Light Gray.*

Note the 12" high yellow '4509' on the tail. Once squadrons received Venturas in the '45' and '46' serial ranges, they began applying four rather than two digit tail numbers.

On Christmas Eve 1943, F/O Donald Ayson piloting NZ4509 and F/O Robert Alford piloting a second Ventura were on survivor patrol over St. George's Channel between New Britain and New Ireland. During the course of the patrol Alford's aircraft was attacked by three Zeros, but succeeded in damaging two before escaping into a cloud. Soon afterwards F/O Ayson's Ventura was attacked by six or more Zeros and although it sustained severe damage, shot down three confirmed, plus two probables and drove off the remaining Japanese fighters. This action resulted in the award of the DFC to F/O Ayson and W/O Williams (navigator) and of the DFM to F/Sgt. Hannah (top gunner). The wireless operator/tunnel gunner F/O Aldridge, acted as fire controller from the astrodome until wounded early in the action. W/O Williams took over in the astrodome, directing the pilots evasive manoeuvres.

The picture was probably taken at Munda, New Georgia, March-April 1944, while with No.2 Sqn. (RNZAF via J. Regan)

Into service with No.1 Squadron

In New Zealand the first nine PV-1s were allocated to No.1 Bomber Reconnaissances (BR) Squadron at Whenuapai Air Station, Auckland, as replacements for its ageing Hudson Mk IIIs. By August it had a full compliment of 18 Venturas and worked-up while continuing its assigned patrol work of the shipping lanes around Auckland. The squadron, under the leadership of Squadron Leader H. C. 'Bert' Walker,* flew north to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal in three flights of six. The first departed New Zealand on 17 October 1943, via Norfolk Island, New Caledonia and Espiritu Santos, arriving at Guadalcanal on 19 October. The Squadron relieved No.3 Sqn on 23 October 1943, although the last of its 18 Venturas did not fly in till the 26th.

Initially, the Venturas were employed as patrol bombers carrying out four regular daily patrols, with extra missions as required. These included anti-shipping and anti-submarine searches, bombing and strafing land targets, mine-laying, photo-reconnaissance, supply drops to Australian coast watchers and navigation escorts for fighter ferry flights.

The Venturas also traced the flight path of US 5th Air Force raids on Rabaul to search for downed aircrews. Dinghies would be dropped and a Catalina called to rescue survivors. Although encounters with Japanese fighters were frequent the Venturas on survivor patrols usually operated in pairs and, with their speed and fire-power, gave a good account of themselves. On 11 November 1943 the squadron even undertook hourly fighter sweeps, in pairs or threes, to knock down any Japanese aircraft which became airborne during the American air raids on Rabaul that day. The squadron chased some Mitsubishi 'Bettys' and were attacked by land based Zeros in return.

From late November 1943 a flight of six aircraft was maintained permanently at Munda airfield, New Georgia, which the squadron had been using as a forward refuelling base. A typical patrol from Munda covered 700 miles and took $4^{1}/4$ hours, so eliminating the extra early morning transit flight made sense.

No.1 Squadrons tour finished in February 1944 and by that time they had completed 886 missions**. The end of this first tour by an RNZAF PV-1 squadron coincided with Allied air power and ground advances causing the Japanese to withdraw their remaining air forces, except for a detachment of nine Zeros at Truk, 700 miles to the north-west. On 7 February 1944, the US Navy PV-1 equipped unit VB-140, took over most of 1 Squadron's assignments and ten days later 2 Squadron RNZAF formally relieved No.1, with Munda as its permanent base.

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* Later Wing Commander, AFC, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US), and more recently the Hon. H.C. Waker, MP.

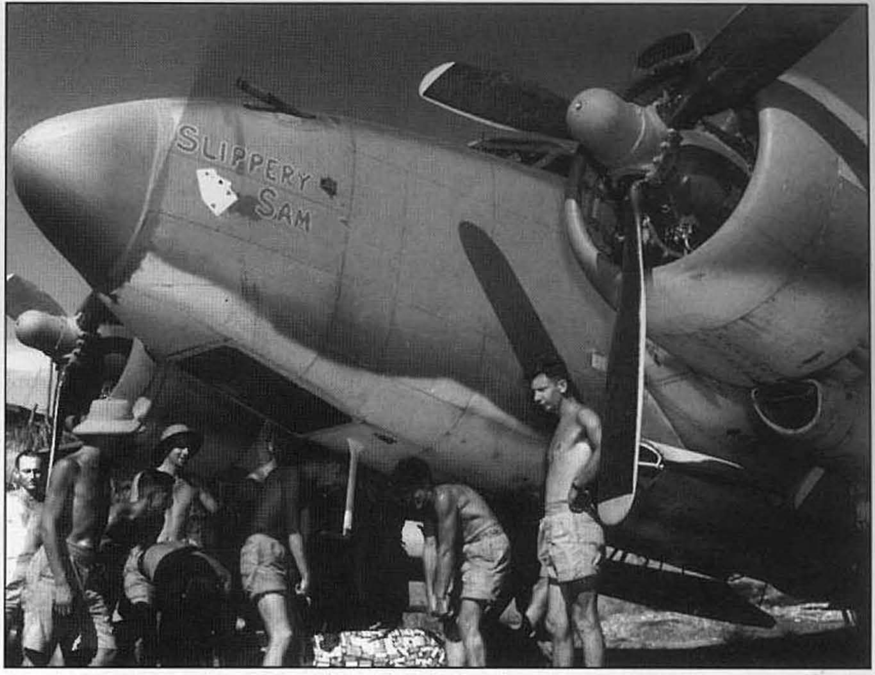
** David Duxbury, article in AHSNZ Journal.

THE SERVICING UNITS

As mentioned in Classic Warbirds No.6, from Mid-1943 onward separate Servicing Units (SUs) maintained RNZAF aircraft in the Pacific and squadrons consisted of aircrew plus a small administrative staff. Although 2 Squadron based itself at Munda, facilities were available for daily servicing only and aircraft were flown to No.10 Servicing Unit (SU) at Henderson Field, for most maintenance.

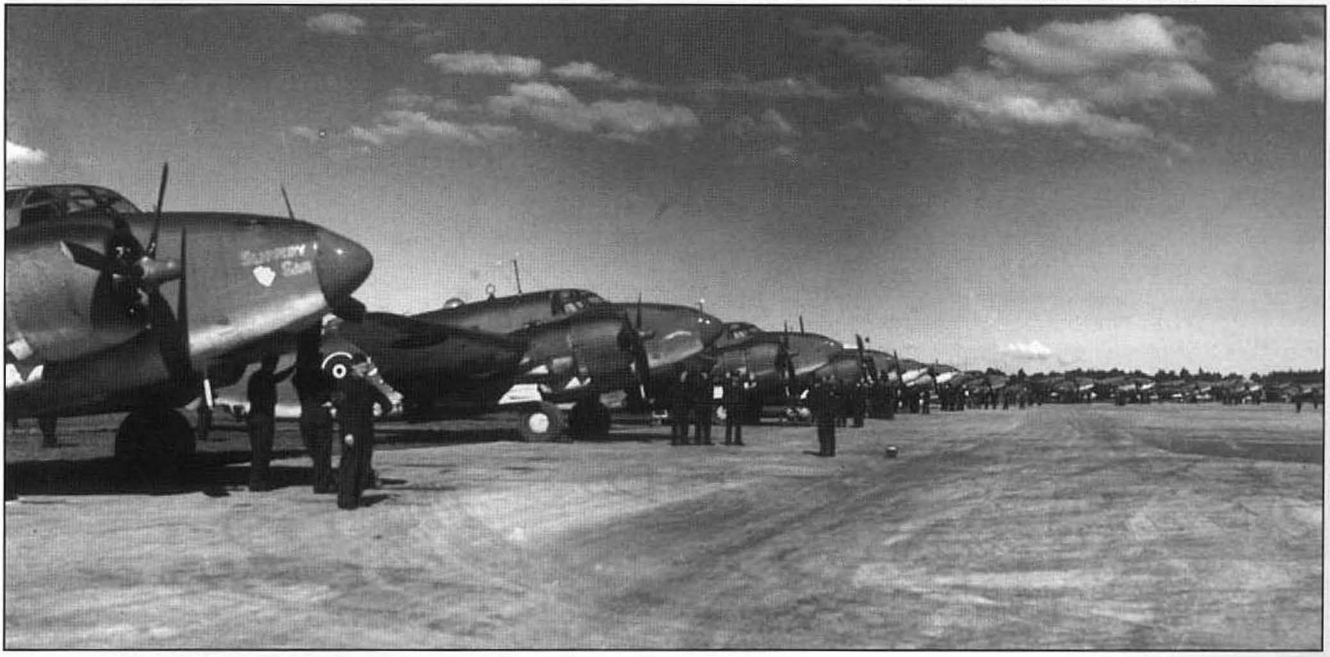
From March 1944 onwards the Venturas were able to refuel from their long patrols at Green Island, which had been taken the previous month by elements of the New Zealand Army's 3rd Division. Though proud to contribute to the Allied campaign in the Pacific, the Division was never able to integrate fully with US forces; it had ceased to exist by the end of 1944 in the face of crippling manpower shortages at home and the decision to maintain the 2nd Division at full strength in the Middle East.

In April 1944, 2 Squadron moved to a new base at Piva* on Bougainville Island, along with No.10 SU which made servicing for the Venturas closer to hand. On 27 April, shortly after 2 Squadron moved to Piva, a daily reconnaissance patrol of Rabaul harbour was



Armourers of 1 (BR) Squadron loading NZ4511 with a decorated bomb, Henderson Field, October 1943. Nose art appeared on both sides with 'Slippery Sam' in red with a white outline. Note the hand-brushed fresh *Intermediate Blue* on the plexiglass nose cone and the dribbled oil stains from gun cleaning wads. (P. Mossong)

A line-up of No.1 Squadron Venturas at Whenuapai before leaving for the war zone, October 1943. Note 'Slippery Sam' nearest the camera. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)



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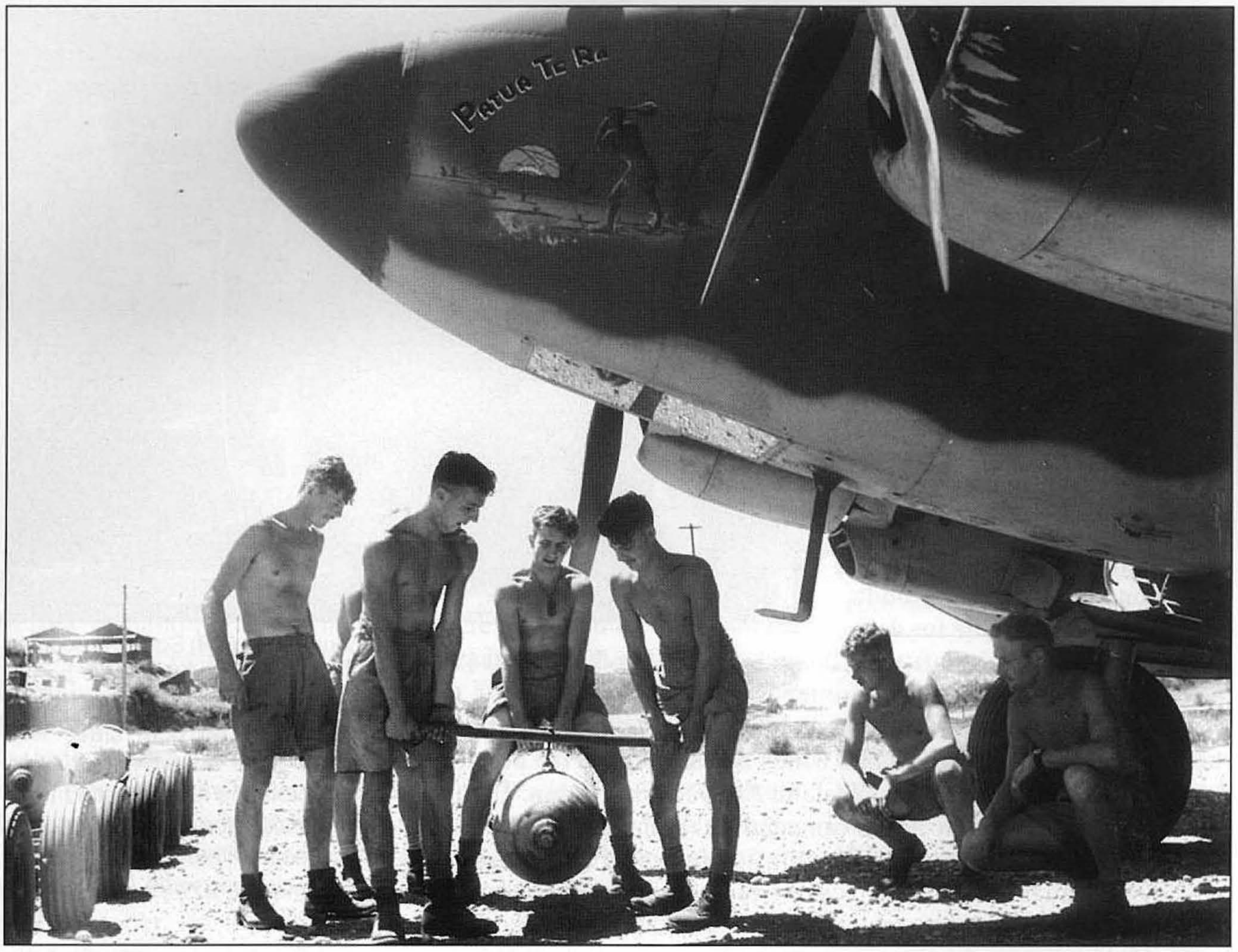
* Allied forces landed at Empress Augusta Bay on 1st November 1943 and quickly prepared three interconnected airfields, (Piva North, Piva South and Torokina), but the Japanese retained possession of the rest of the island, including the large base at Kahili, until the end of the war.



Ground crew of 10 SU bombing-up NZ4516, Henderson Field, December 1943. This aircraft was normally flown by F/Lt. Spicer of No.1 (BR) Squadron. The Maori inscription 'Patua Te Ra' translates as 'Striking the Sun' and the illustration depicts Maui, a warrior from Maori mythology pegging down ropes to prevent the Japanese sun rising over the horizon. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

instituted with a Ventura flying over the area every morning to check shipping movements. Late in May 1944 No.2 Squadron was relieved by No.9, which had spent several months working-up at Whenuapai and, in June No.9 became the first RNZAF squadron to take part in the Rabaul bombing raids.

By June 1944, with further Islands in the South-West Pacific liberated by the US Marine Corps, the Americans declared the South Pacific Area non-operational and sought to sideline the RNZAF Ventura squadrons to garrison duties. However some quick Kiwi politicking in Washington combined with the high reputation the RNZAF had with US commanders in the islands resulted in an agreement that two Ventura squadrons would move north along the Solomon Islands chain, with Emirau Island in the St. Matthias group and Green Island as their bases.

No.3 Squadron on a second operational tour, operated from Emirau in October and November 1944, with No.10 SU providing maintenance. Green Island was occupied on 29 October 1944 by Venturas of 1 Squadron, previously at Henderson Field on their second operational tour. Because of the lack of equipment for the squadron's servicing unit (No.14 SU)* combat operations did not start until 21 November when the squadron replaced a US Navy PBJ-1 Mitchell unit doing weather and shipping count reconnaissance flights to Rabaul. When US Marine Corps Corsair units left Emirau for the Philippines, No 4 Squadron took over yet another activity - flying over enemy held areas of New Ireland, looking for Japanese vehicles.

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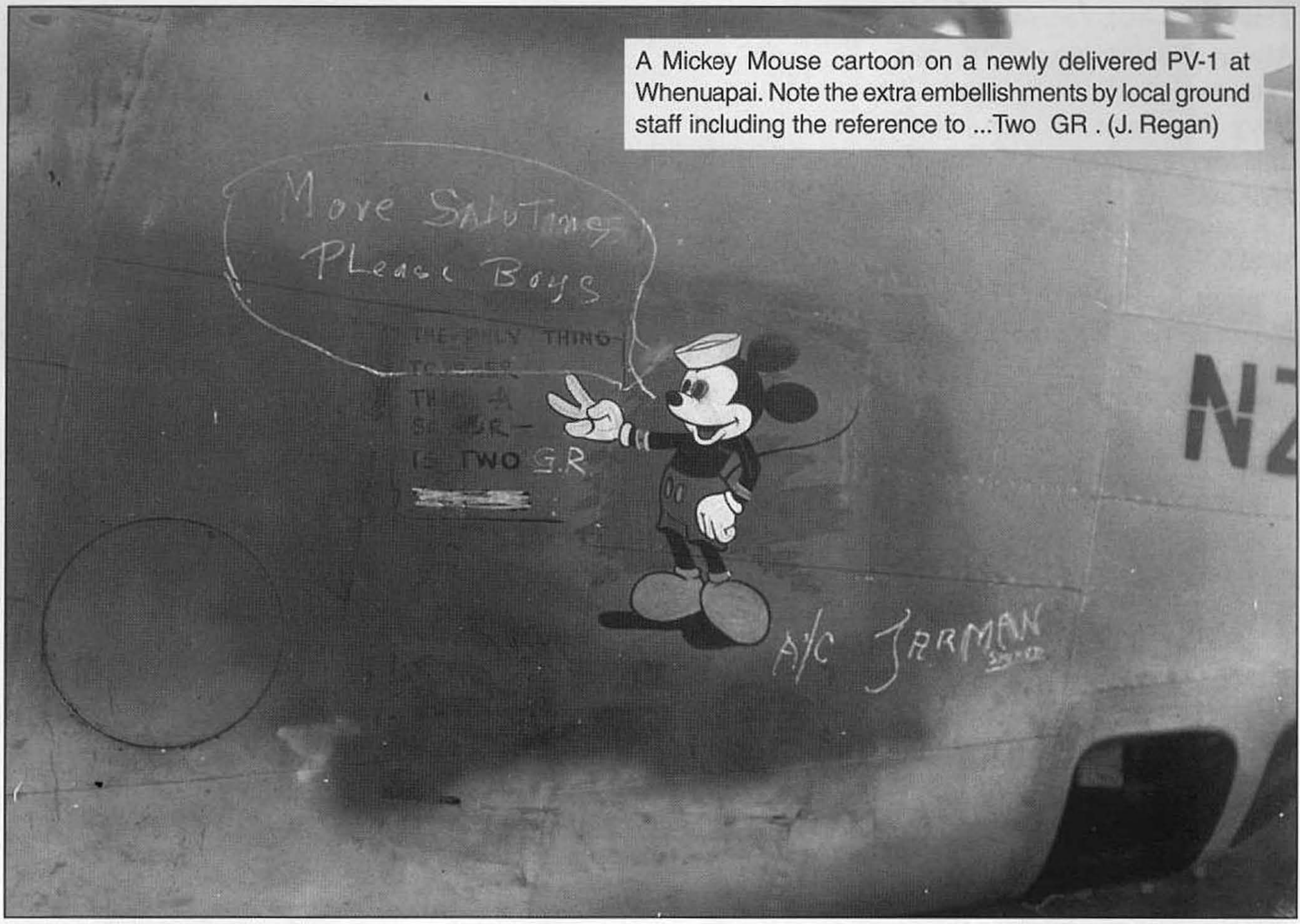
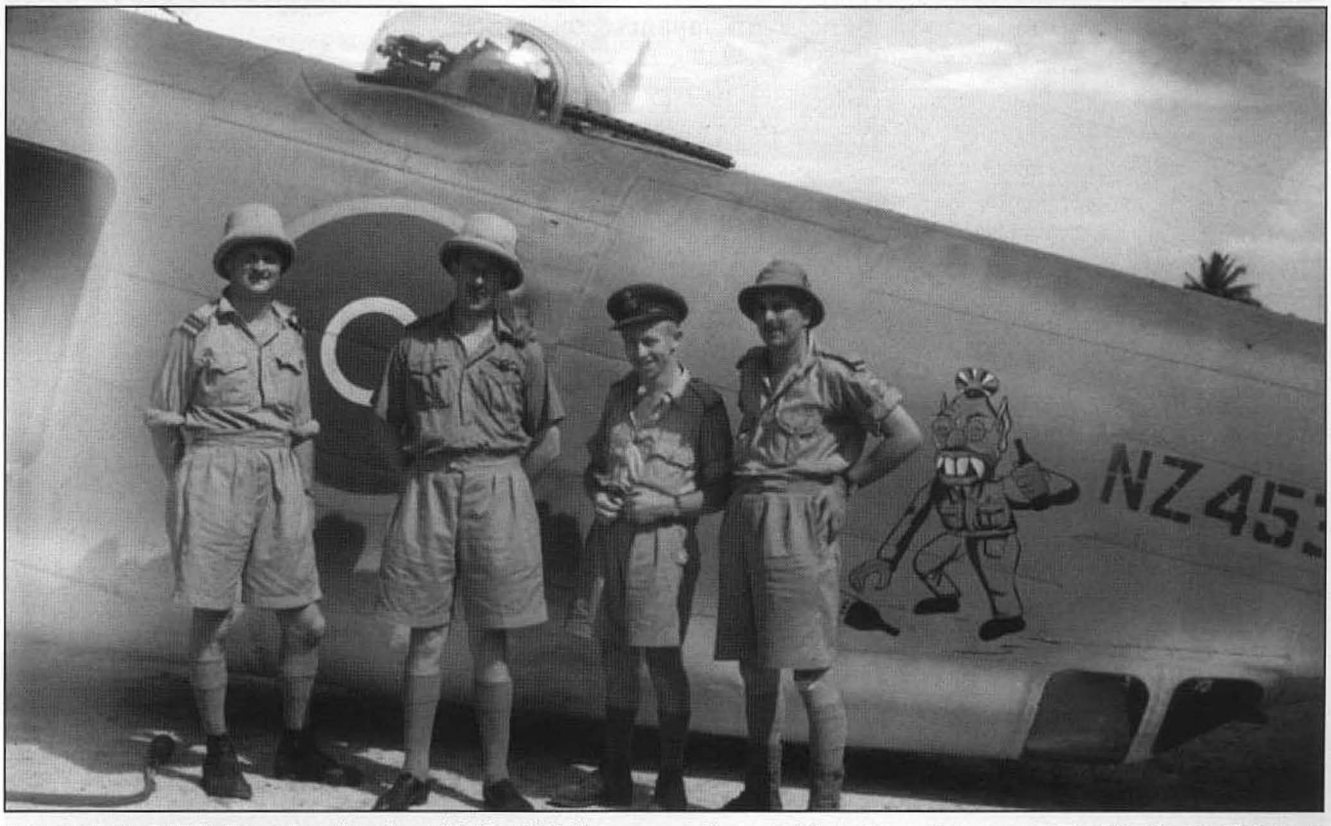
* This is incorrectly recorded as No.15 (SU) in the RNZAF Official History, by J.M.S. Ross.



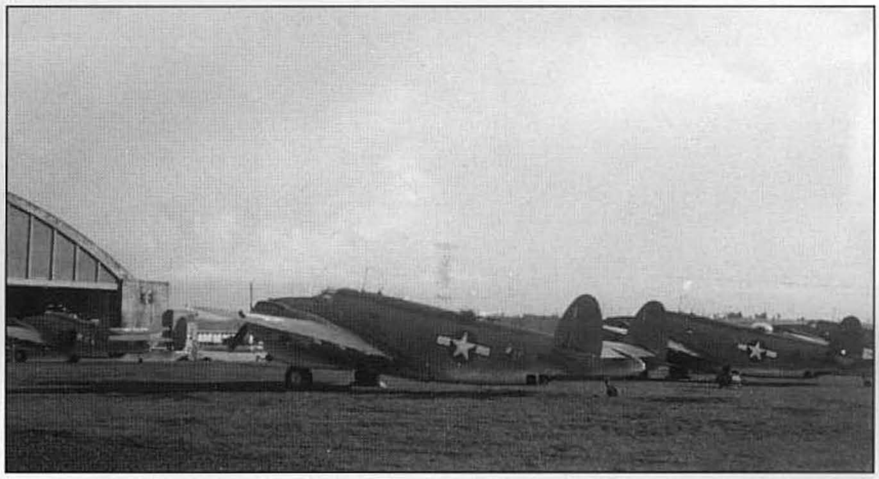
A Mickey Mouse cartoon on a newly delivered PV-1 at Whenuapai. Note the extra embellishments by local ground staff including the reference to ...Two GR . (J. Regan)



Airmen from 2 (BR) Squadron (posing with 'Bert' Walker, second from right) during a stop over at Espiritu Santo, February 1944. Note the RAF style tropical uniform. This machine was delivered to the RNZAF in September 1943 and has freshly painted blue-white-blue roundels. The original US insignia 'bars' were painted over in New Zealand and have yet to be reapplied prior to going into combat. No doubt the cartoon figure would have been removed before the aircraft flew on operations! (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

THE RABAUL 'HECKLE'

About November 1944, the Venturas began to fly with US Navy PBJs and PBYs in night nuisance raids over Rabaul, the idea being to constantly disturb the Japanese in the area. The 'heckle' as it was called, consisted of aircraft circling over Rabaul and dropping small bombs or even empty beer bottles at irregular intervals. The bottles whined like bombs as they fell and, it was hoped, caused the enemy to believe delayed action bombs had been dropped.

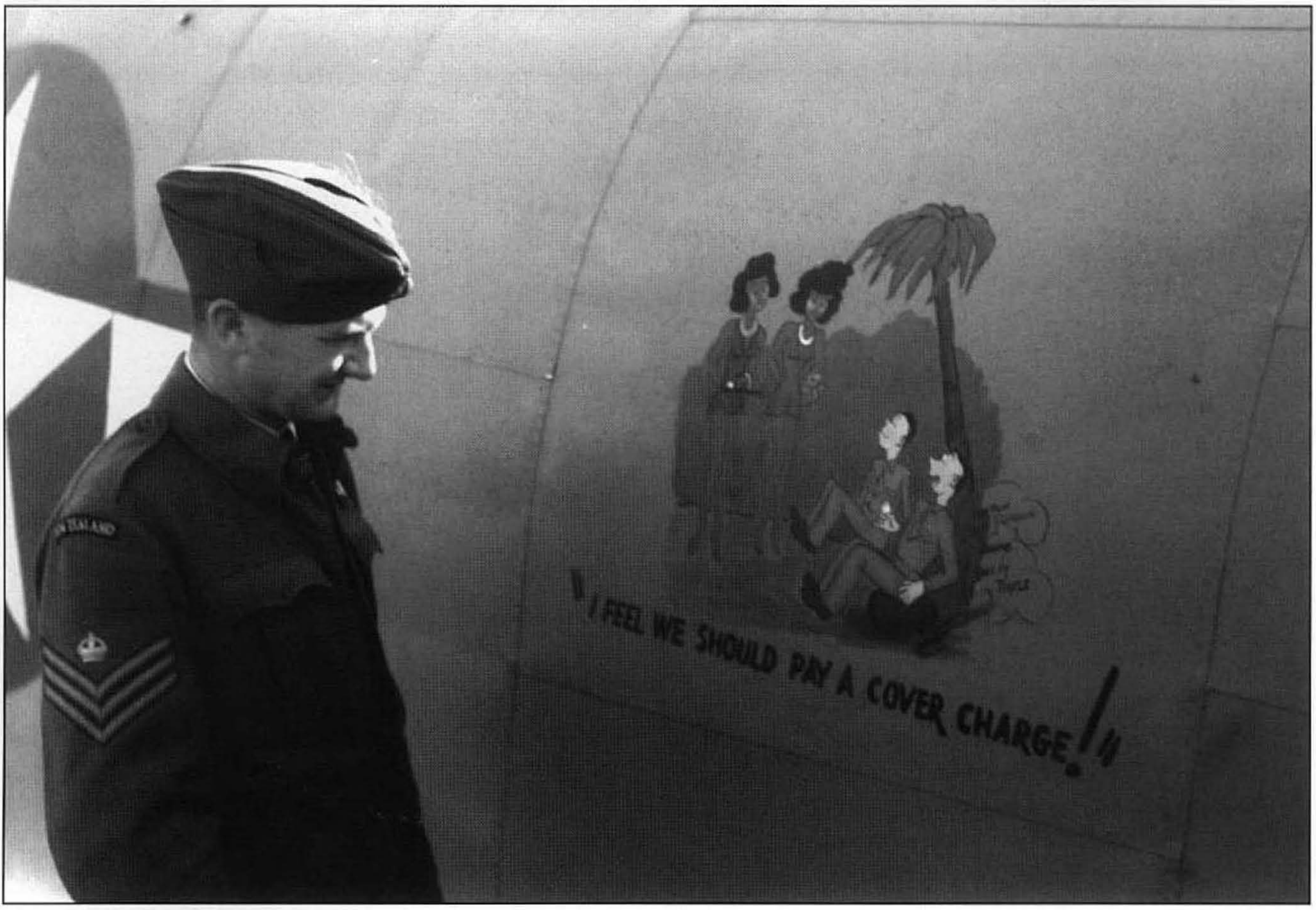


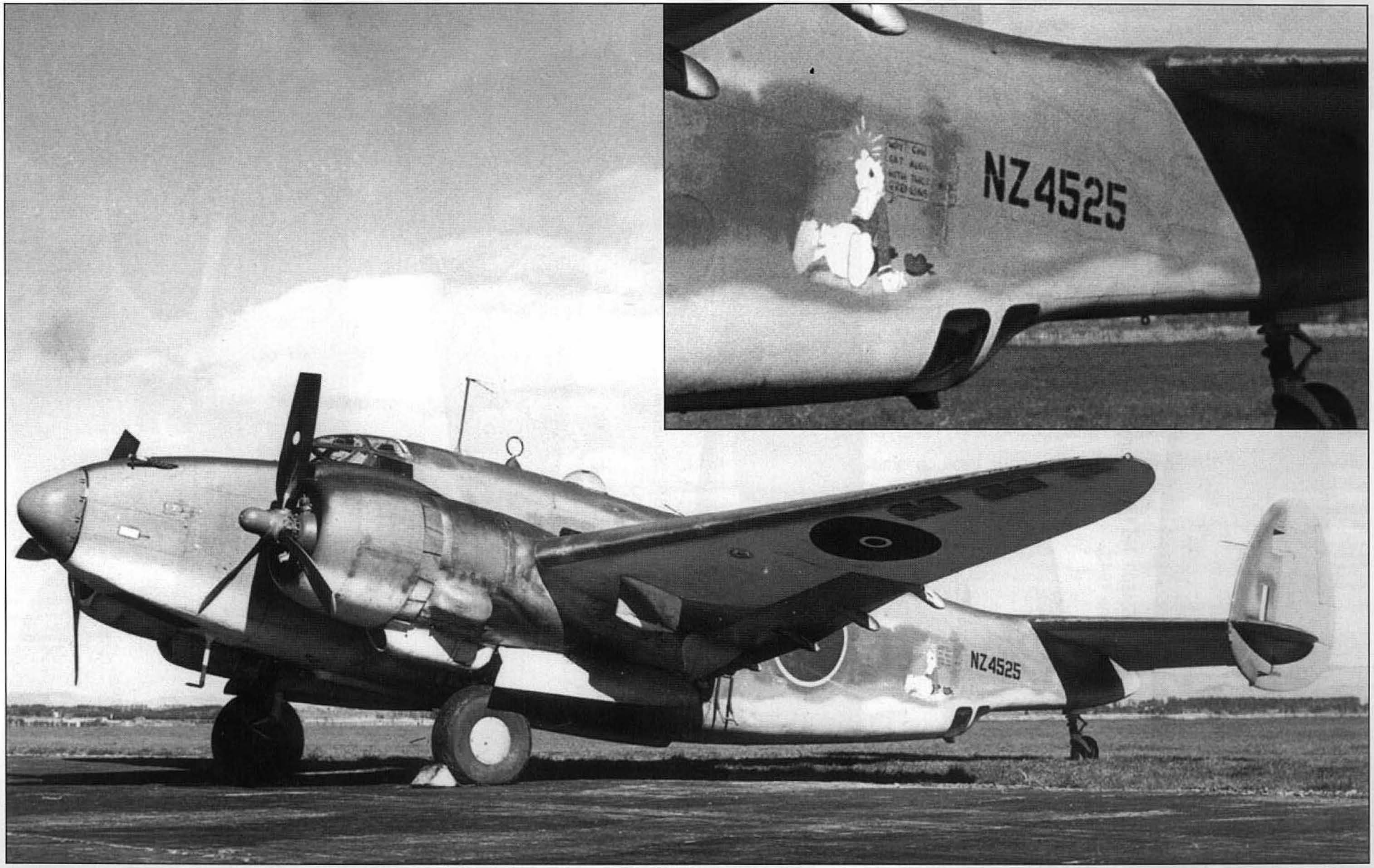
This picture at Whenuapai in April 1944, includes PV-1 Ventura NZ4613 on the right, still with its US stars-and-bars. (J. Regan)

Since the Venturas were not at this time fitted with bombsights, most 'real' bombing missions were carried out with the help of a US Marine Corps PBJ Mitchell acting as bomber-leader. The Venturas, usually six or eight, dropped their bombs when the leader released his – not a very satisfactory arrangement. For some larger missions the RNZAF Venturas would form up with Marine Corps PBJs in formations of up to 50 aircraft.

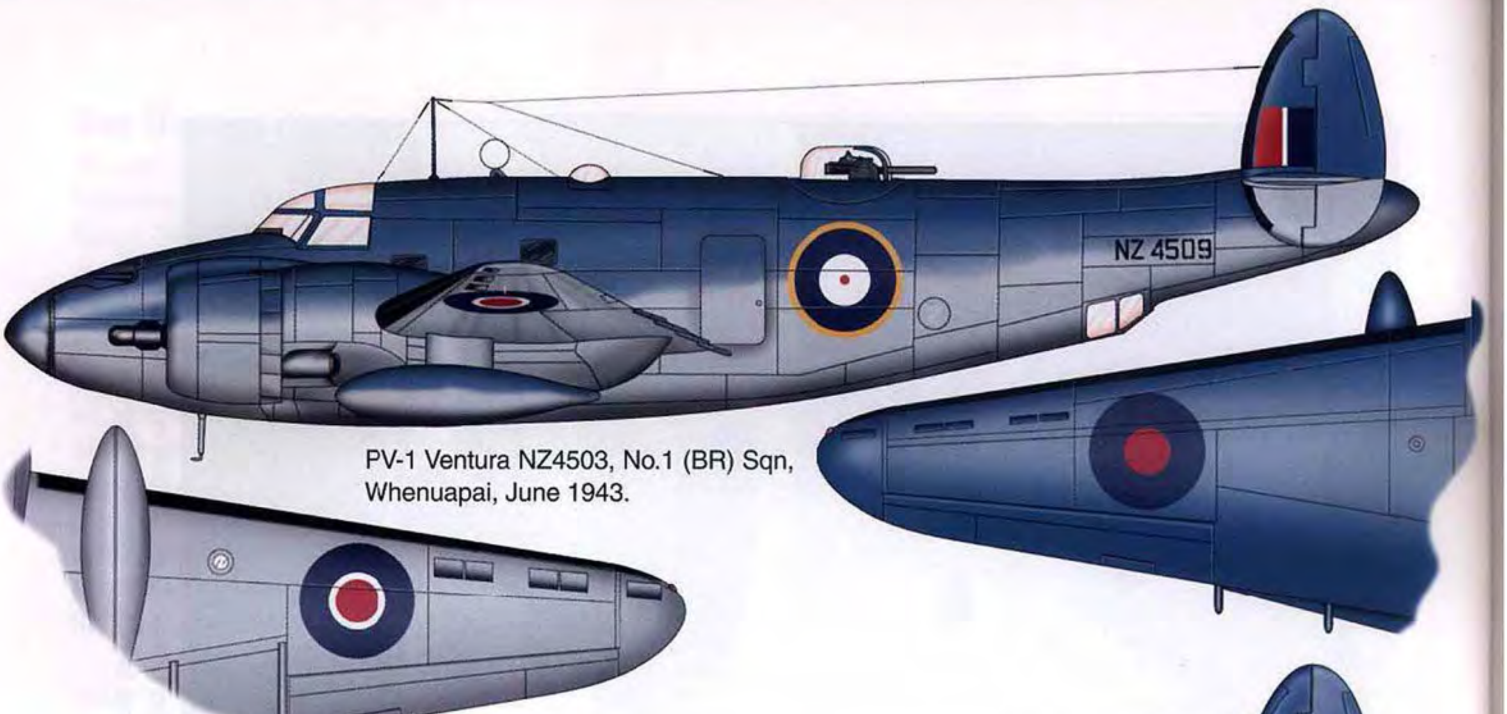
The need to maintain full strength squadrons at forward bases led to a practice of posting aircraft and crews to operational squadrons from units ostensibly still resting, working-up, or patrolling the Auckland shipping lanes. This policy was most unpopular with non-operational units because it detracted from unit moral as squadrons prepared for action in their own right. With Japanese resistance

An RNZAF Flight Sergeant admires the fuselage artwork on the newly arrived NZ4613, April 1944. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

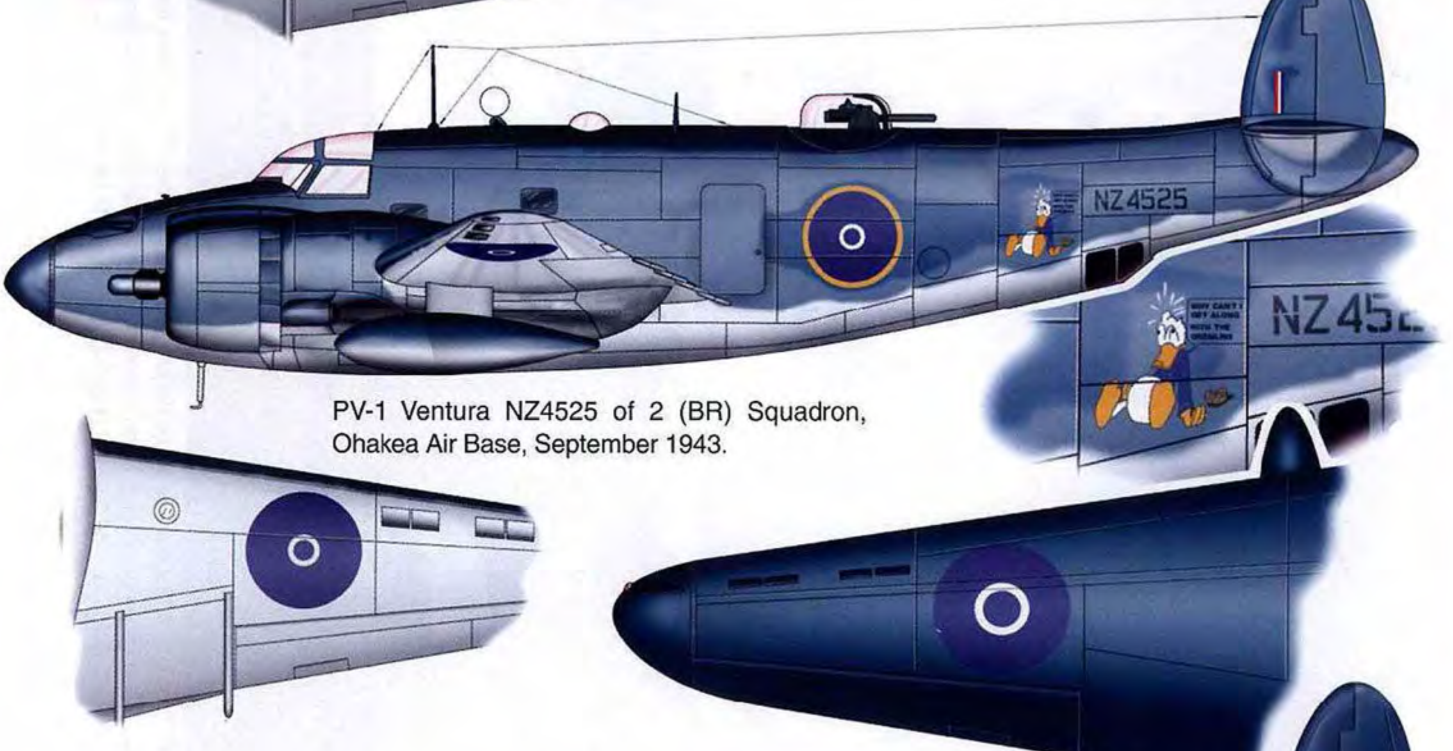

"I FEEL WE SHOULD PAY A COVER CHARGE!"



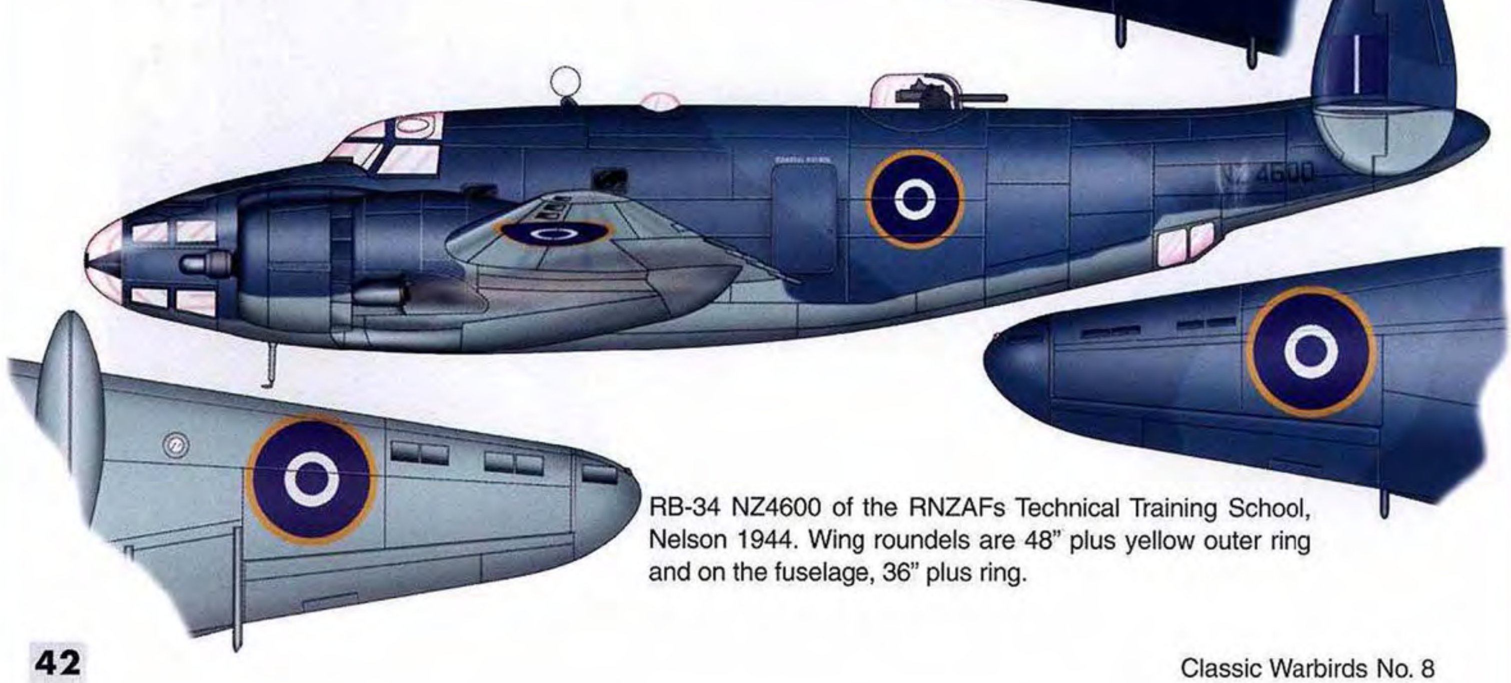
PV-1 Ventura NZ4525 of 2 (BR) Squadron at RNZAF Ohakea, 100 miles north of Wellington, September 1943. Note the Donald Duck cartoon on fuselage and the darker fresh paint evident, where the US insignia bars have been painted out in the process of changing to RNZAF roundels. The cartoon caption reads, WHY CAN'T I GET ALONG WITH THE *.....* GREMLINS ? (RNZAF via P. Mossong)



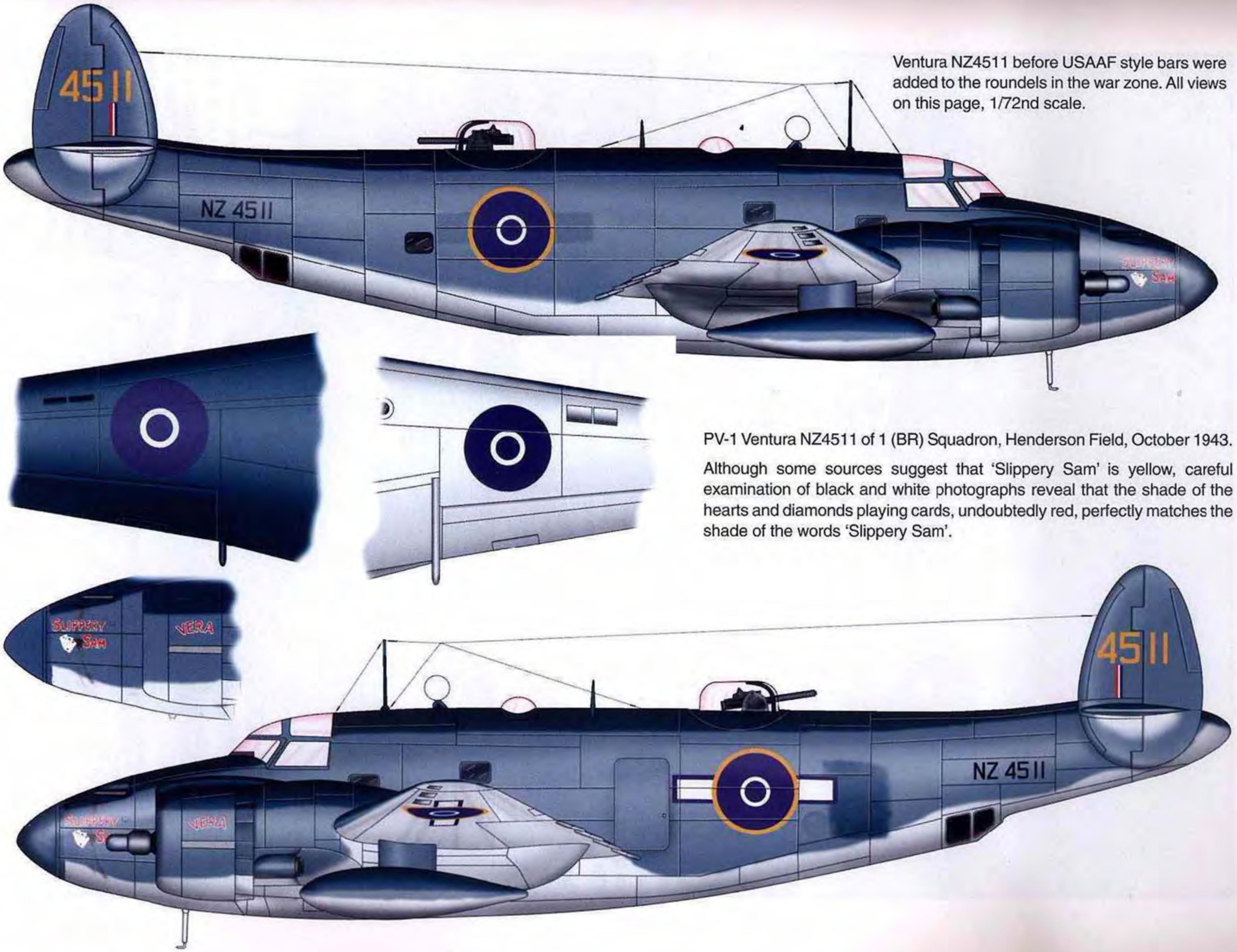
PV-1 Ventura NZ4503, No.1 (BR) Sqn, Whenuapai, June 1943.


NZ4525
WHY CAN'T I GET ALONG WITH THE GREMLINS
NZ452

PV-1 Ventura NZ4525 of 2 (BR) Squadron, Ohakea Air Base, September 1943.



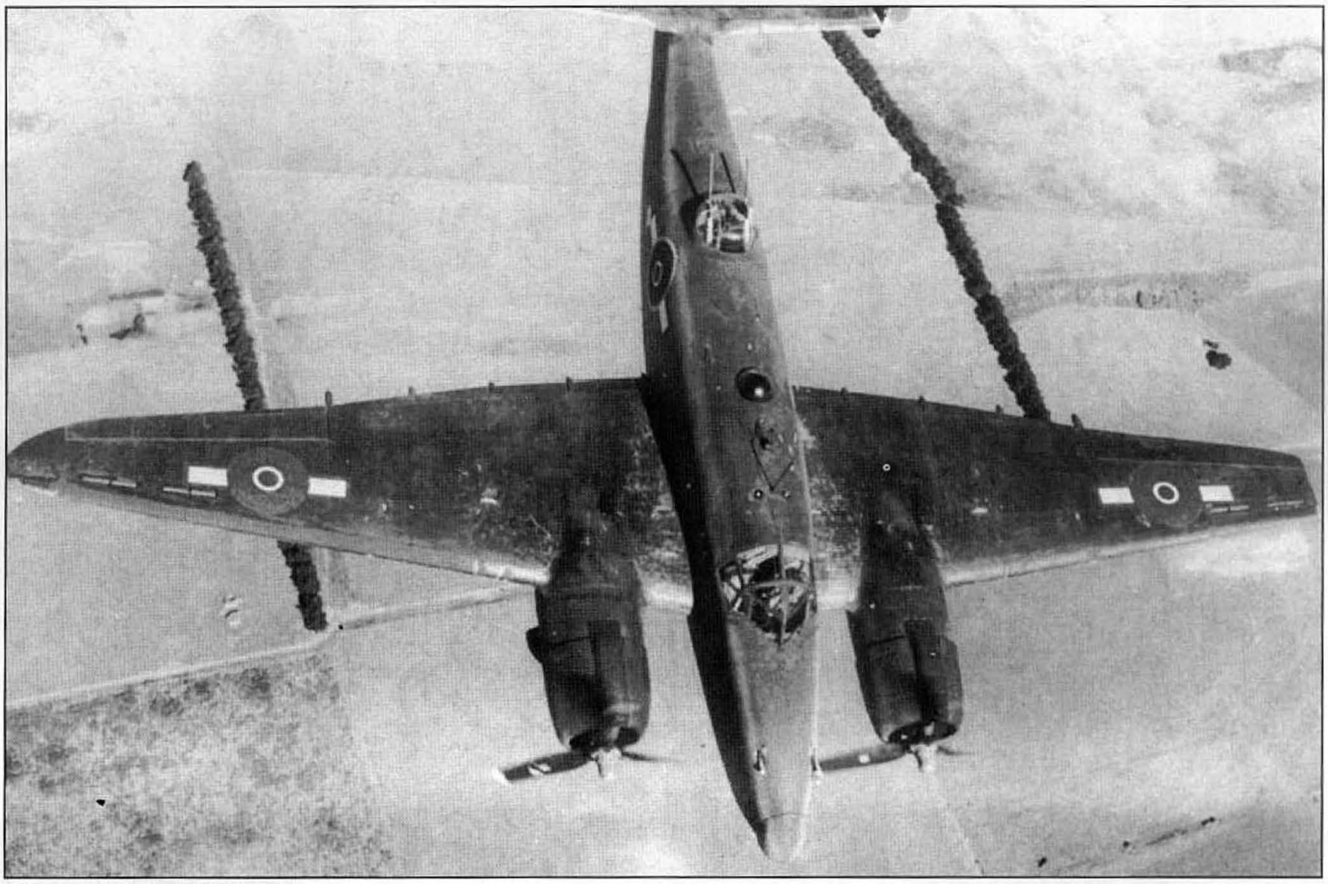
RB-34 NZ4600 of the RNZAFs Technical Training School, Nelson 1944. Wing roundels are 48" plus yellow outer ring and on the fuselage, 36" plus ring.



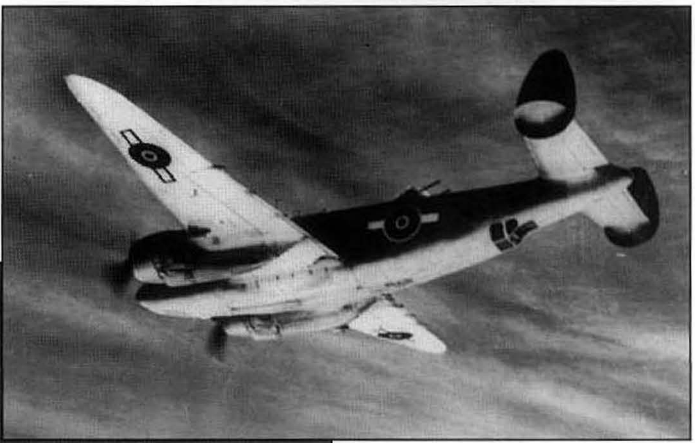
Ventura NZ4511 before USAAF style bars were added to the roundels in the war zone. All views on this page, 1/72nd scale.

PV-1 Ventura NZ4511 of 1 (BR) Squadron, Henderson Field, October 1943.

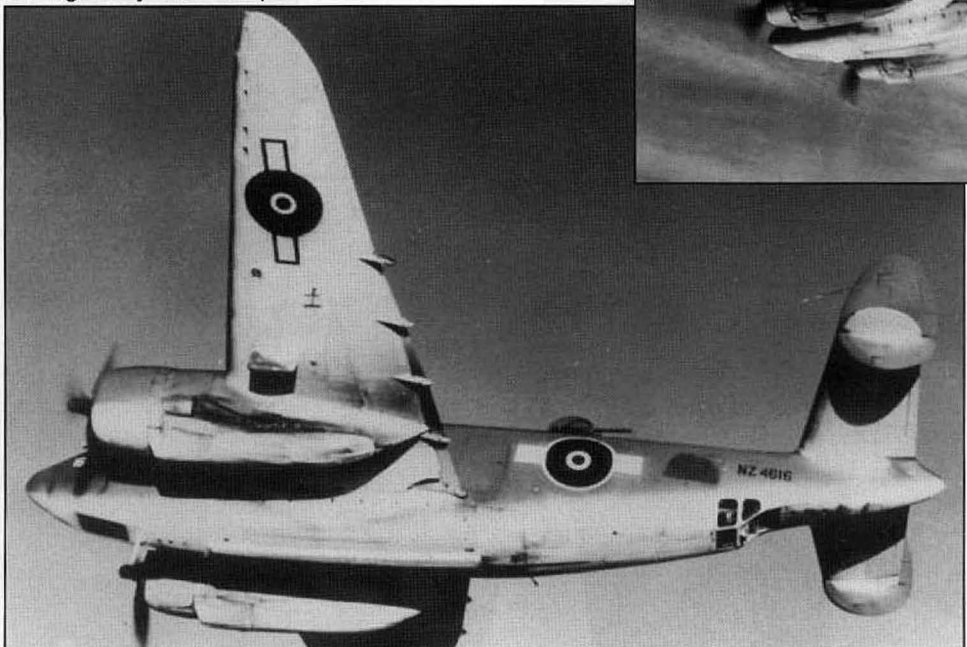
Although some sources suggest that 'Slippery Sam' is yellow, careful examination of black and white photographs reveal that the shade of the hearts and diamonds playing cards, undoubtedly red, perfectly matches the shade of the words 'Slippery Sam'.



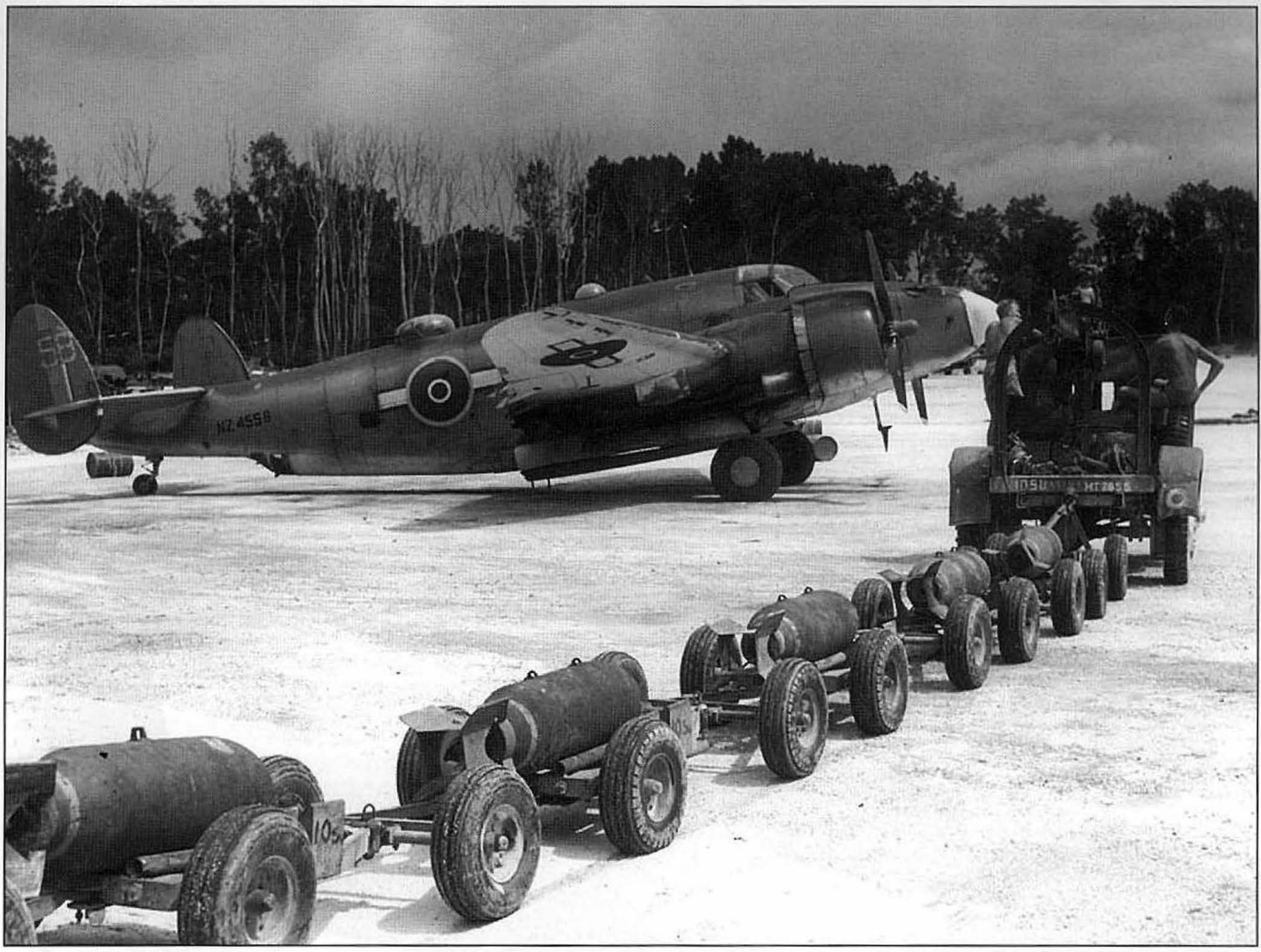
An upper view of NZ4563, giving some impression of the gloss value of *Semi-Gloss Sea Blue,* when compared with the *Non-Specular Sea Blue* wing leading edges. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)



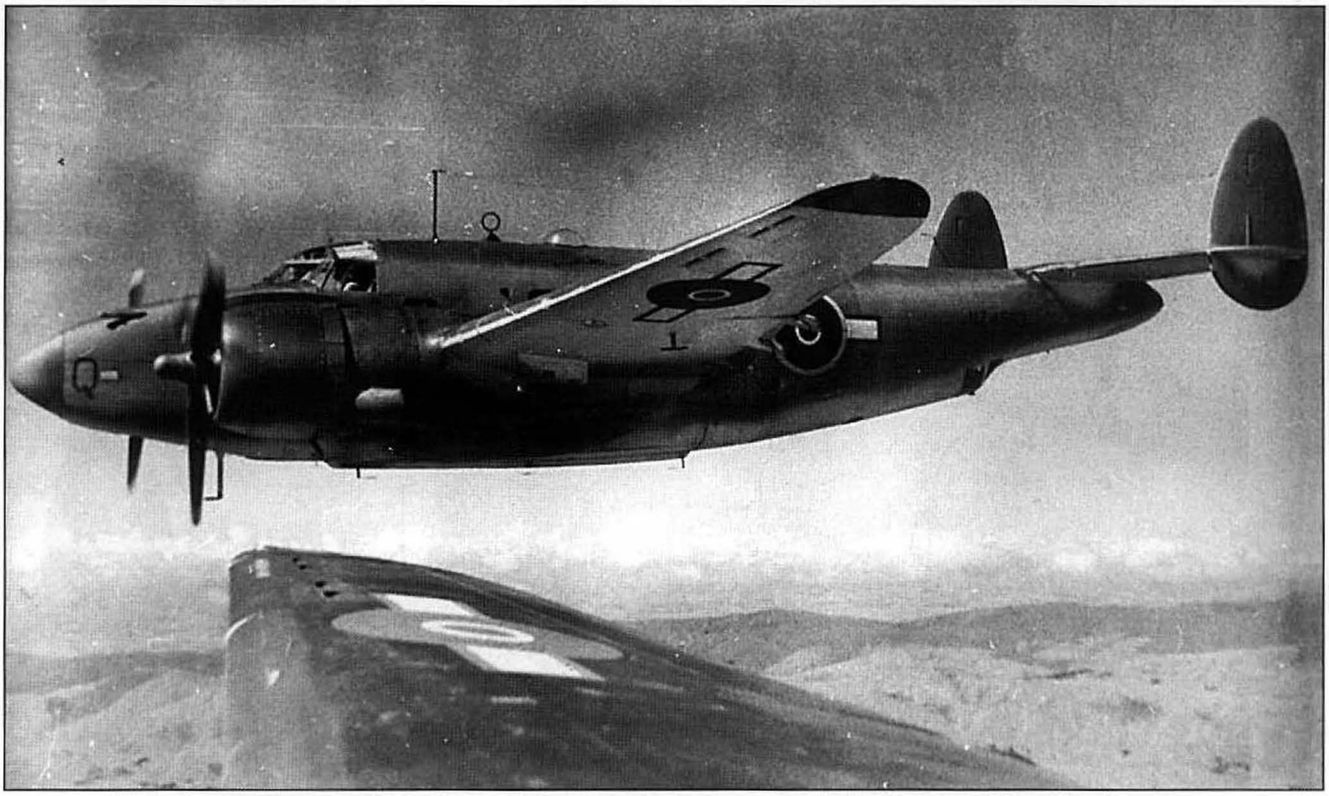
Right: An RNZAF Ventura belly photo, taken in the operational area. Note the swept-back layout of the roundel bars. (D.P. Woodhall, AHSNZ via Robert E. Montgomery collection)



The underside of NZ4616, based at Ohakea with No.2 Sqn – but taken on a photo sortie from Whenuapai – 22 November 1945. Note the area of fresh paint on the rear fuselage where a cartoon has been over-painted and the three downward identification lights just forward of the bomb-bay. These were coloured red (foremost), amber, and green. (RNZAF via J. Regan)



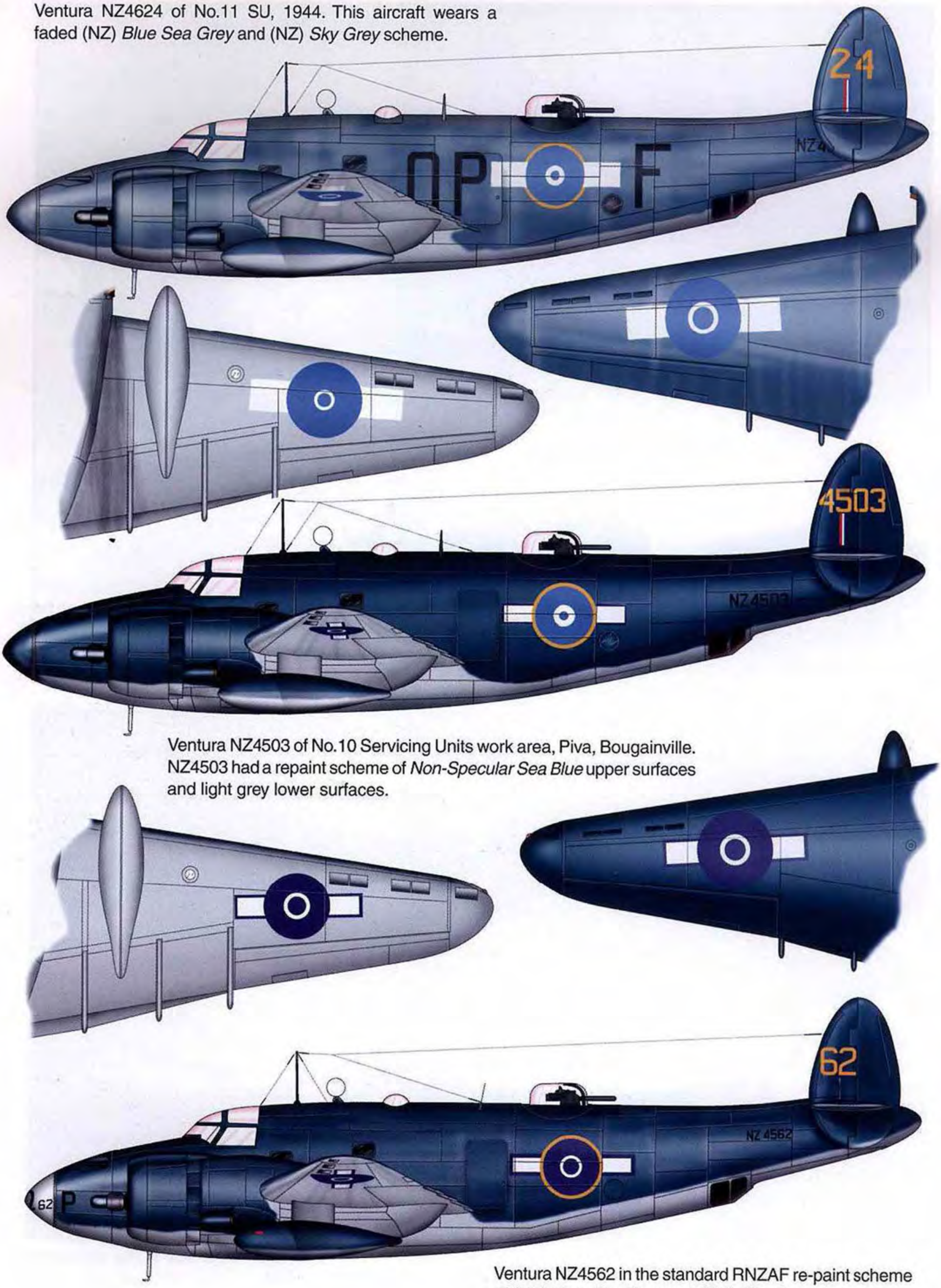
Ventura PV-1 NZ4558 of No.10 SU/No.8 (BR) Squadron, Emirau, 14 February 1945. (RNZAF via J. Regan)



Ventura NZ4563 of 3 (BR) Sqn Ohakea, mid-1944. Note the dark under-wing-tips and faded blue in the upperwing roundel of photographer's aircraft. (D.M. Furness, via Robert E. Montgomery collection)

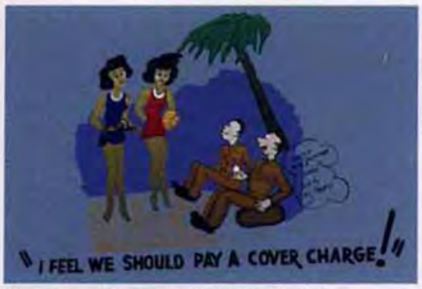
Don Furness served as a Navigator with 2 (BR) Sqn during the later part of the war.

Ventura NZ4624 of No.11 SU, 1944. This aircraft wears a faded (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Sky Grey* scheme.

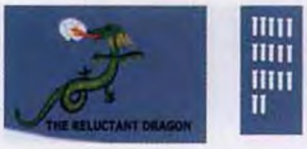


Ventura NZ4503 of No.10 Servicing Units work area, Piva, Bougainville. NZ4503 had a repaint scheme of *Non-Specular Sea Blue* upper surfaces and light grey lower surfaces.

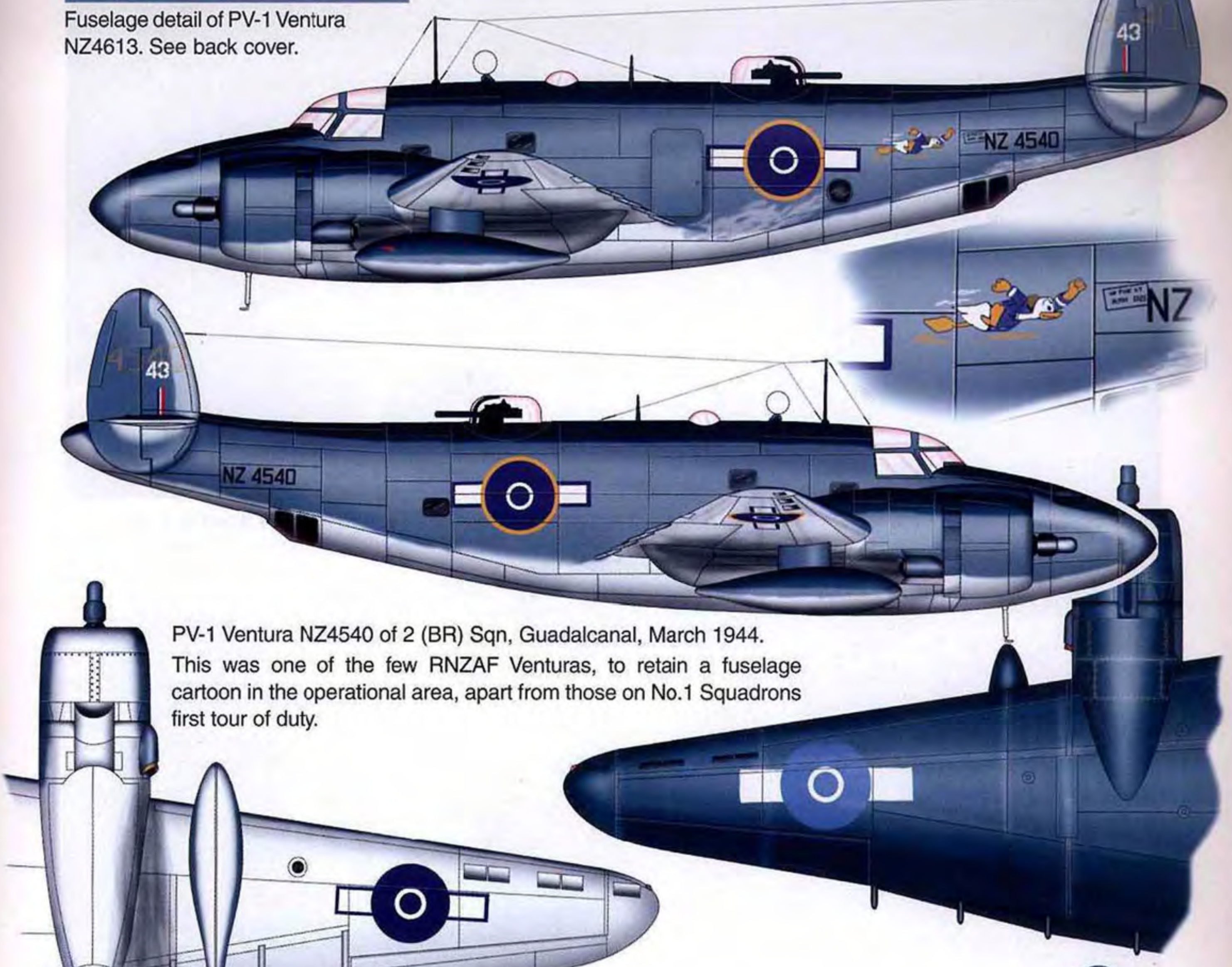
Ventura NZ4562 in the standard RNZAF re-paint scheme of (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Sky Grey.*


"I FEEL WE SHOULD PAY A COVER CHARGE!"

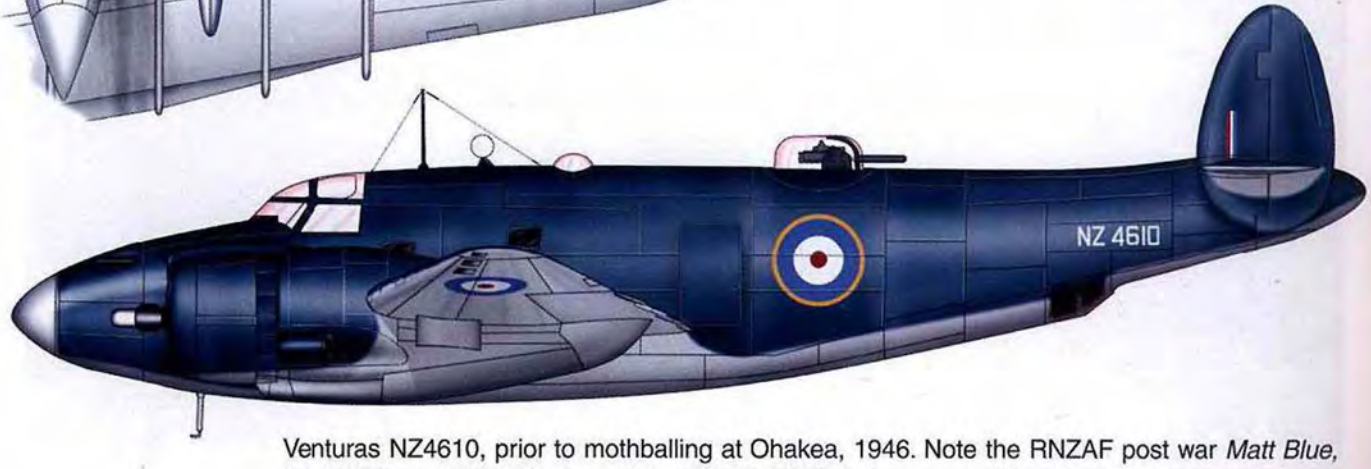
Fuselage detail of PV-1 Ventura NZ4613. See back cover.


THE RELUCTANT DRAGON

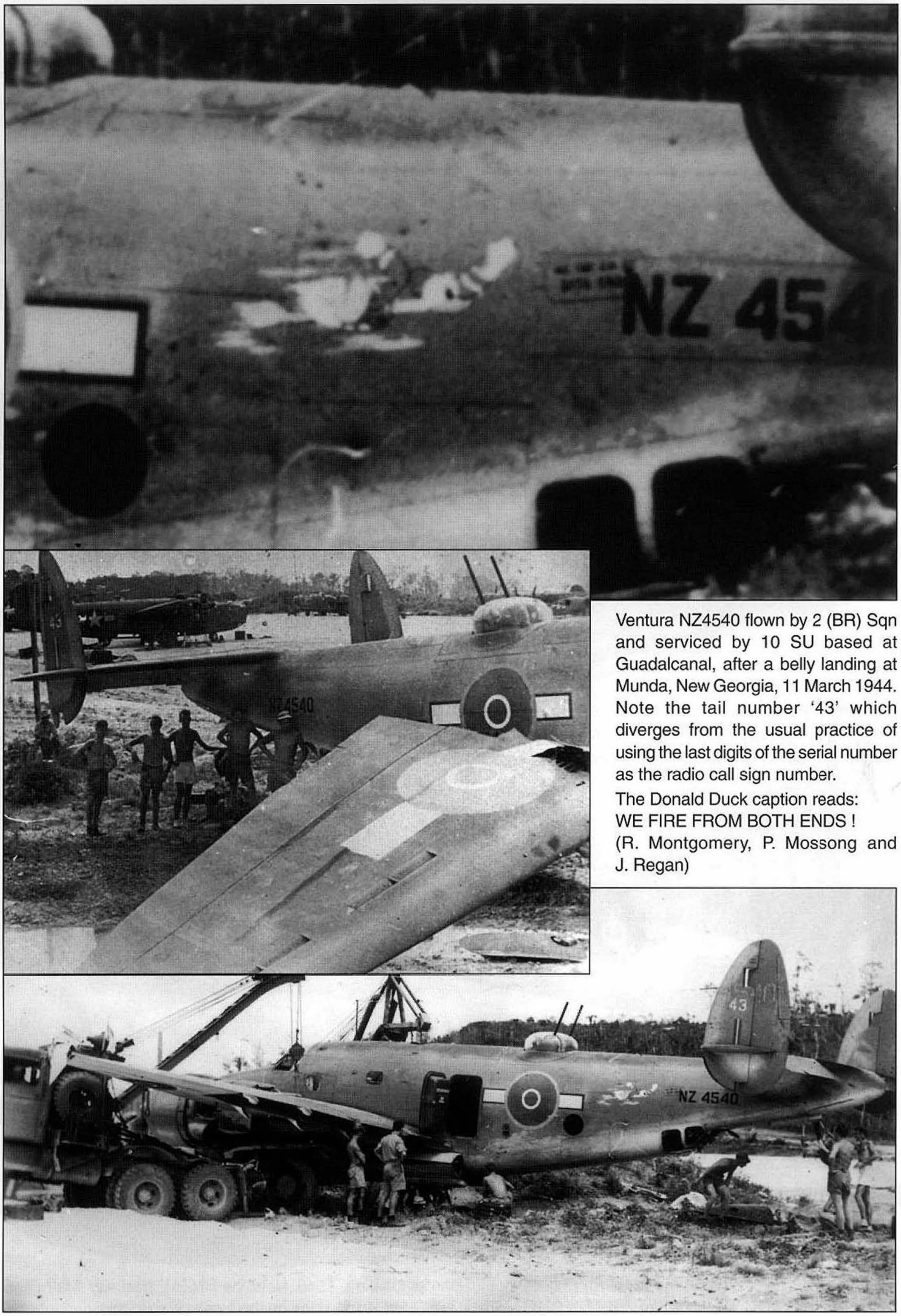
Details for Ventura A59-75 'SF-R', 'The Reluctant Dragon'. See back cover.


43
NZ 4540
NZ
43
NZ 4540

PV-1 Ventura NZ4540 of 2 (BR) Sqn, Guadalcanal, March 1944. This was one of the few RNZAF Venturas, to retain a fuselage cartoon in the operational area, apart from those on No.1 Squadrons first tour of duty.



Venturas NZ4610, prior to mothballing at Ohakea, 1946. Note the RNZAF post war *Matt Blue, Matt White* and *Matt Red* roundels, with *Matt Yellow* rings on the fuselage roundels.



Ventura NZ4540 flown by 2 (BR) Sqn and serviced by 10 SU based at Guadalcanal, after a belly landing at Munda, New Georgia, 11 March 1944. Note the tail number '43' which diverges from the usual practice of using the last digits of the serial number as the radio call sign number.

The Donald Duck caption reads:
WE FIRE FROM BOTH ENDS !
(R. Montgomery, P. Mossong and J. Regan)

tapering off by the end of 1944 these sudden crew postings became less frequent.

No.3 Squadron were relieved by No.4 by December – same Venturas, just different crews. Over the previous year No.4 had been responsible for shipping escort and anti-submarine patrols from Fiji, first with Hudsons, then Venturas, and for a period with six PBY Catalina 'Black Cats', borrowed from US Navy squadron VP-44.

And there were frequent acts of courage... "Graham Parker, who did a part-tour with No.9 Squadron, performed an act of outstanding courage, endurance and bravery for which he was made an immediate award of the DSO. Low-level reconnaissance of southern Bougainville roads saw him struck by a solitary bullet which took four inches of bone out of one arm. He dropped his bombs on the target, flew his aircraft (Venturas have only one pilot) safely home and made a perfect landing. Then he passed out."*

Right: LAC Fitter 2a Brydon Ainsley 'Dinny' Mygind at Jacquinot Bay, New Britain with 10 SU. Mygind is holding a set of bomb aiming gear outside the crew entry door of a Ventura. The bulged door held the aircraft's emergency equipment including a dingy which was designed to pop open automatically when thrown into water. Note the lighter blue roundel bar. (B. Mygind)

No.10 SU servicing area, Piva, Bougainville, late 1944. Note the areas of fresher paint where cartoons have been over-painted. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

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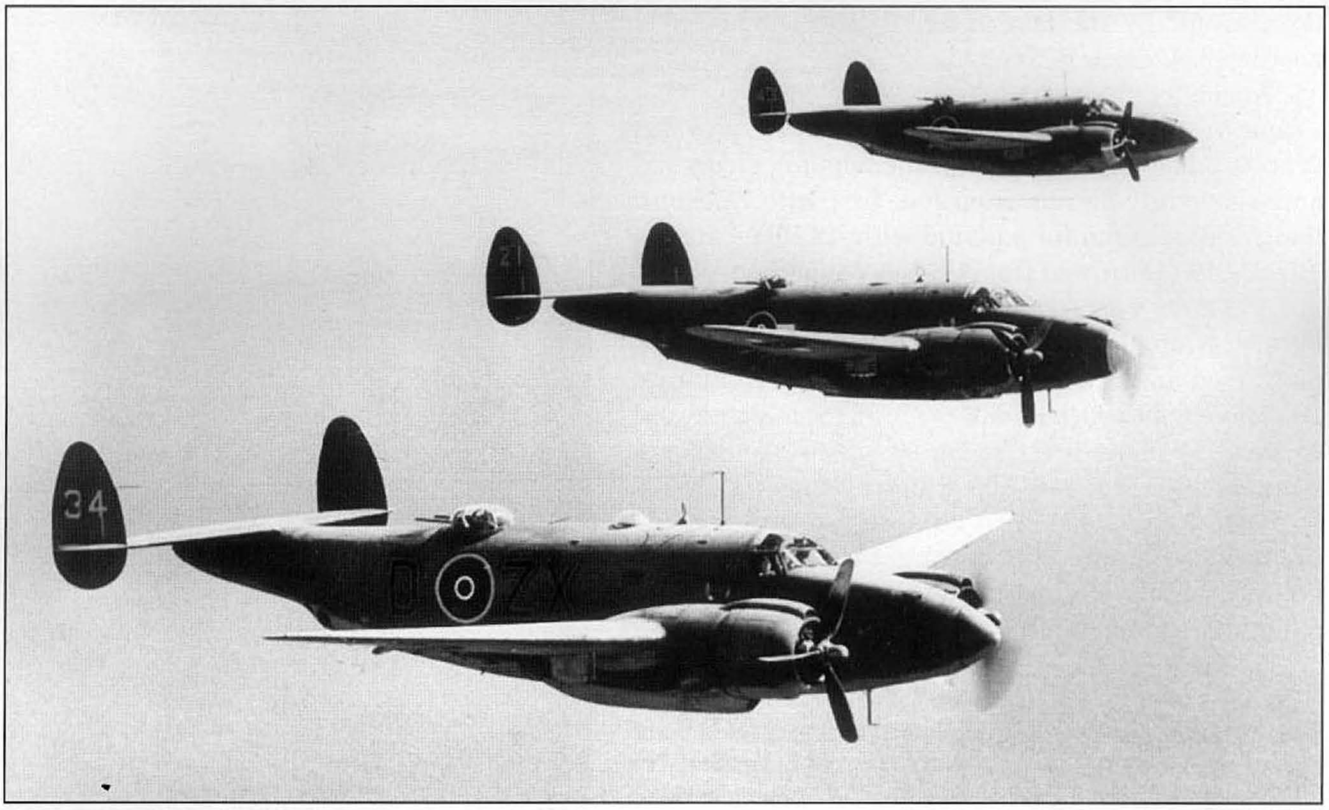
* Hancock, who incorrectly records the decoration as a DFC.

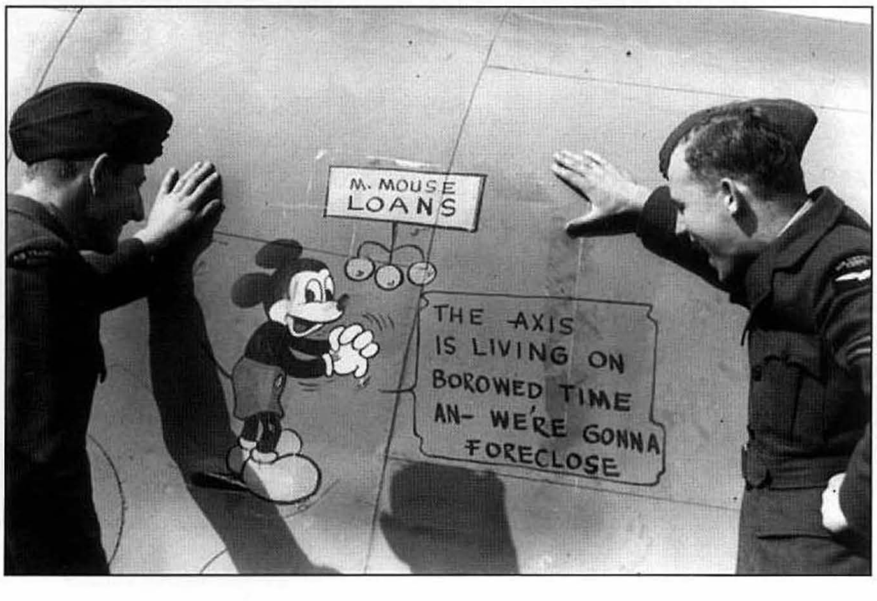


Venturas of No.1 (Bomber) OTU practising single engine flying (very important on the PV-1), 21 June 1945. Nearest is NZ4534 'ZX-D', then NZ4521 'ZX-G' and NZ4543 'ZX-F'. NZ4534 and NZ4543 appear to have been repainted in (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and probably (NZ) *Sky Grey* lower surfaces. The 'ZX' Codes were black with a yellow outline and the tail numbers yellow. The Ohakea based No.1 OTU was the only non-operational unit in the RNZAF to be equipped with Venturas and they were replaced by C-47s four months before the unit disbanded in September 1945. (RNZAF via R. Montgomery and J. Regan)

At the close of 1944 the RNZAF Ventura squadrons were deployed as follows; No.1 Squadron on Green Island, No.2 at Henderson Field, No.3 on leave in New Zealand, No.4 at Emirau, No.8 in Fiji and No.9 at Whenuapai, Auckland.*

THE LAST LAP

Early in 1945 No.1 Squadron finished its second tour and was replaced by No.2 who continued with the Rabaul nuisance raids, although these were reduced to one Ventura every second night – with half the bombs set to explode 24 hours later. No.2 Squadron was replaced by No.3 in March 1945 and the mission focus shifted from Rabaul to the many Japanese pockets holding out on Bougainville. In addition, a pair of RNZAF Corsairs began to accompany the night-heckling Ventura over Rabaul, in an attempt to catch Japanese aircraft slipping in and out of the five Japanese held airfields on the Gazelle Peninsula.


M. MOUSE LOANS
THE AXIS IS LIVING ON BOROWED TIME AN- WE'RE GONNA FORECLOSE

Two Air Training Corps (ATC) cadets admire Disney artwork on a PV-1 Ventura fuselage, 1943. (RNZAF via P. Mossong)

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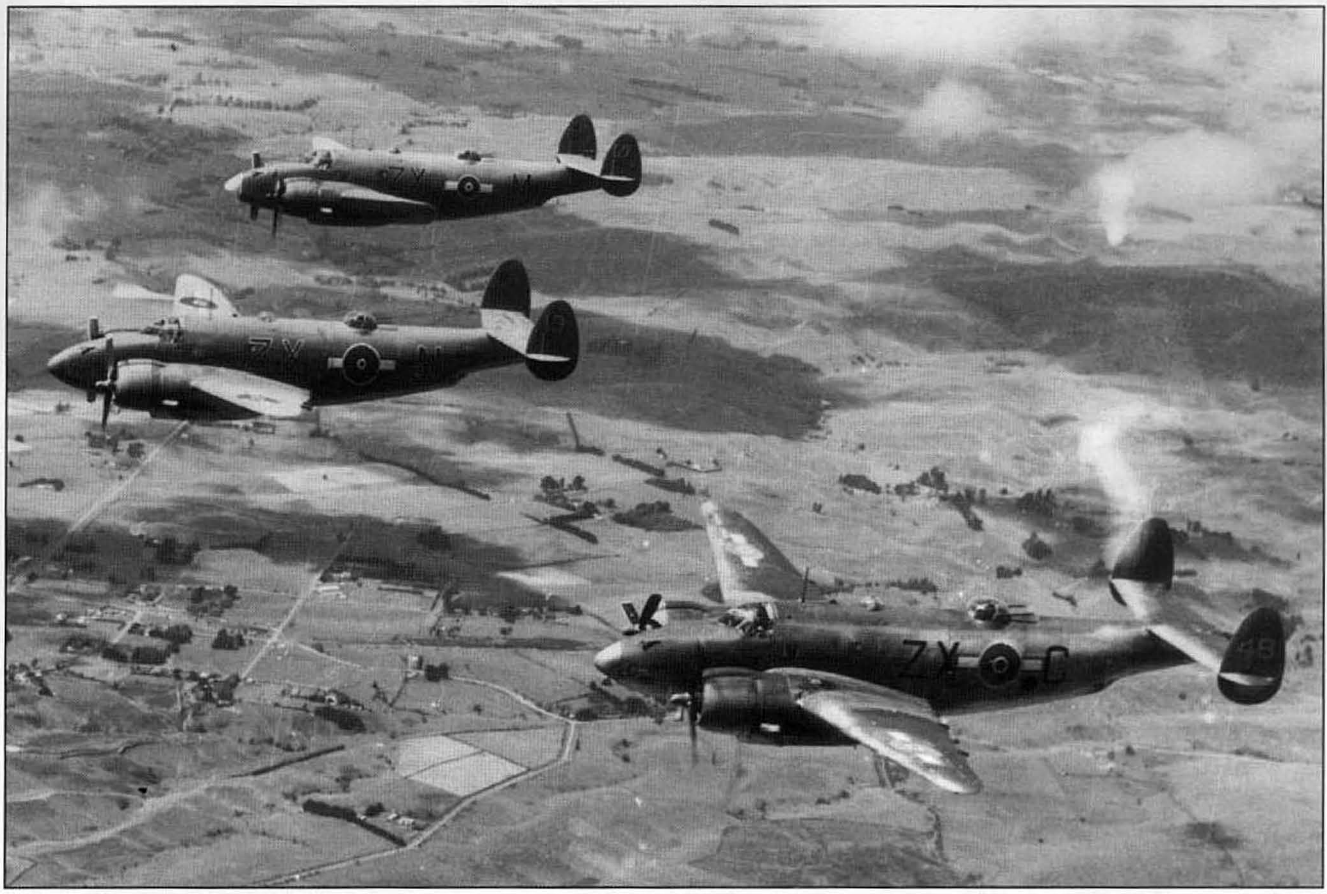
[*] David Duxbury, AHSNZ Journal article, May 1978.



No.1 (Bomber) OTU Venturas on 10 January 1945. NZ4507 'ZX-M' and NZ4513 'ZX-N' are in (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* upper surfaces and either (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue* or (NZ) *Sky Grey* lower surfaces, while NZ4548 still wears it's original US Navy 'three-tone' scheme. The 'ZX' Codes were black, usually with a yellow outline and the tail numbers yellow. (J. Regan)

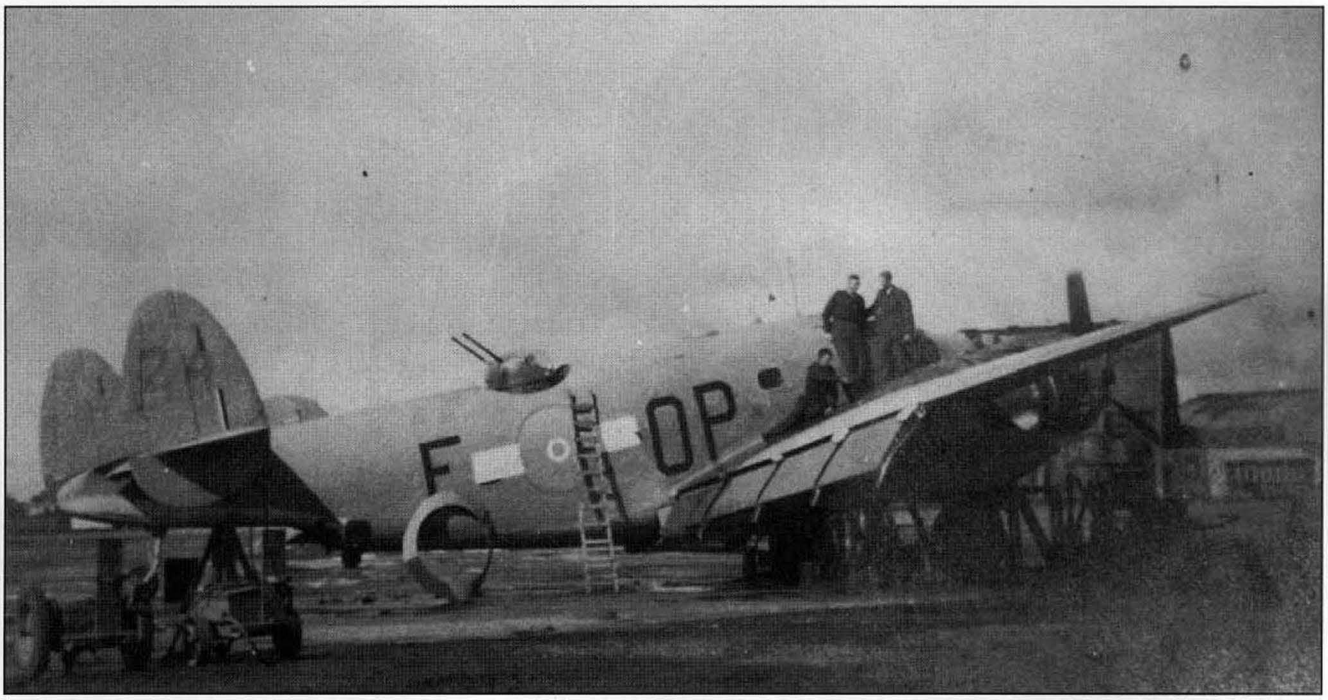
The RNZAF Venturas were finally fitted with bombsights in April 1945 and the first raid with them was comprised of six aircraft from 3 Squadron, attacking Vanakanau airfield on 8 April. As Japanese resistance tapered off in the northern Solomon Islands, the number of leaflet raids increased. Losses still occurred and on 9 June NZ4613 disappeared on a leaflet raid. The next day another 3 Squadron aircraft, NZ4609, was shot down over New Ireland while on an aircrew-survivor search patrol. It proved to be the last of nine Venturas the RNZAF listed as lost or destroyed in action. At the war's end only two Ventura squadrons remained in the forward area, No.2 at Jacquinot Bay and No.4 at Los Negros. After VJ-Day No.2 flew security patrols and dropped surrender leaflets. On 6 September they escorted the Royal Navy aircraft carrier *HMS Glory* to Rabaul, where General Sturdee accepted the surrender of the Japanese South East Army.

Postwar, the Ventura soon disappeared from service, serving in small numbers with No.2 Squadron at Ohakea on aerial surveys, meteorological flights and searches. Most were held in open storage at Rukuhia, with others at Ohakea, Woodbourne, Nelson and Wigram. The last twelve were withdrawn in May 1946, to be replaced by older but more 'gentle' Lockheed Hudsons. In the early postwar period, it was reckoned that there were more aircraft lined up at Rukuhia than had been available to the RAF during the Battle of Britain!

CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS

RB-34

The RB-34s shipped to New Zealand appear to have retained the colour scheme applied on the production line; *Dark Earth* and *Olive Drab* (the accepted substitute for British MAP *Dark Green*) uppersurfaces, with *Sky* undersides. Some may have been received in the standard

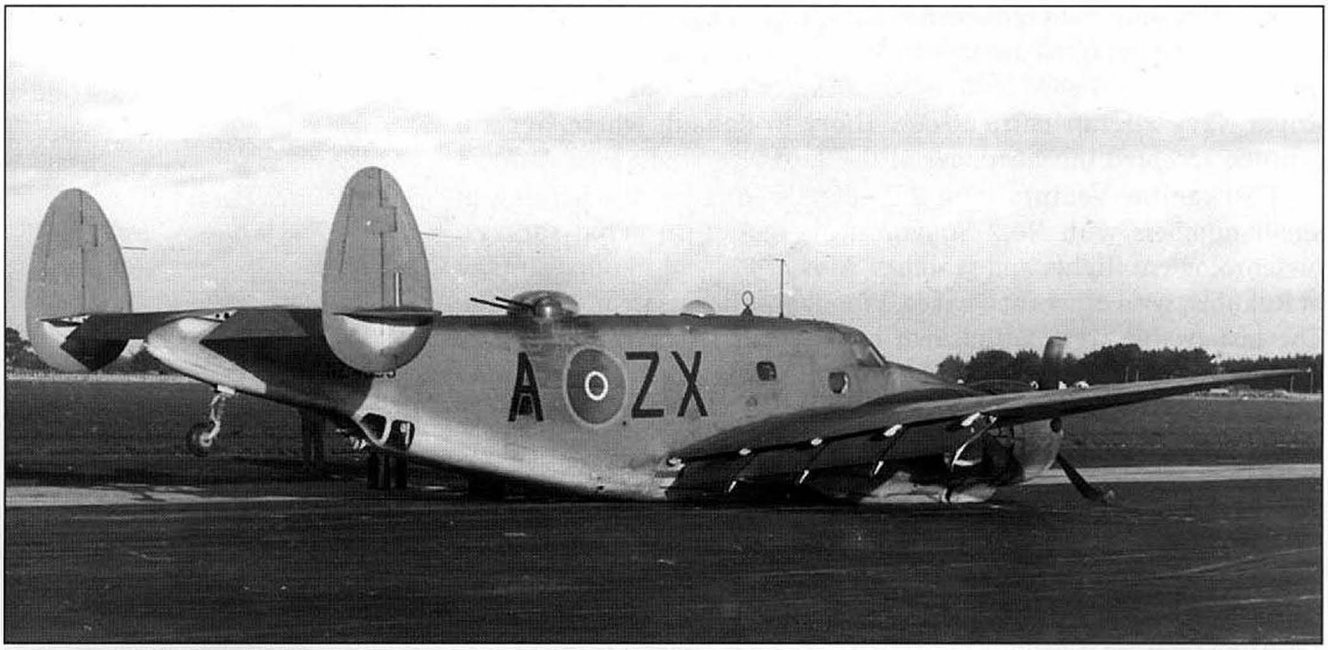


USAAF scheme of *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Gray*. It seems they arrived with the standard USAAF national insignia of the period of a white-star-on-blue-disc in six positions and the RNZAF applied its own markings over these.

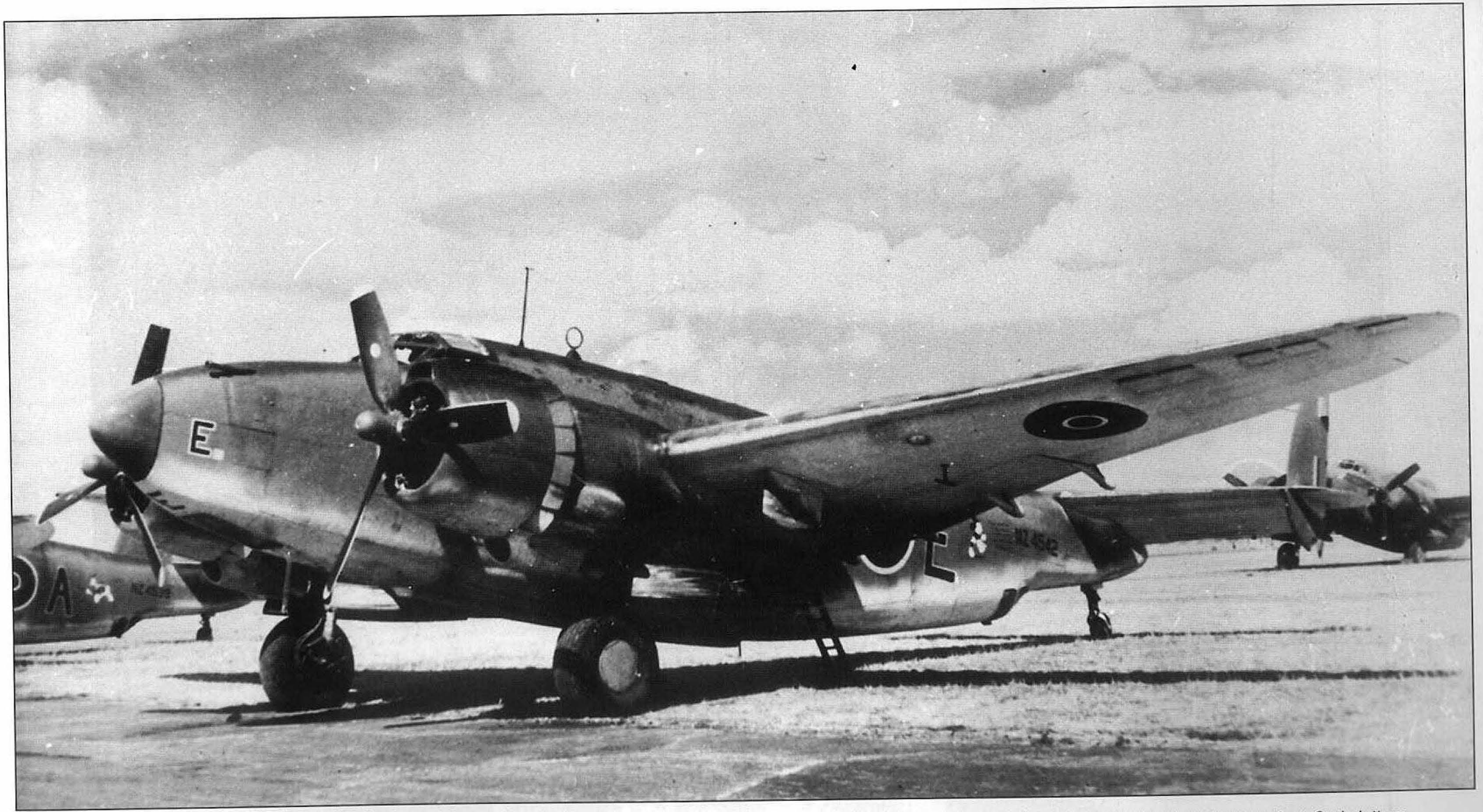
RB-34s were operated at Whenuapai in training roles from June 1943 onwards but were gradually 'pushed to one side' as more PV-1s arrived into 1944

From the outset the RB-34s were repainted with locally-manufactured paints. The uppersurfaces were generally (NZ) *Blue Grey* (similar to the US Navy *Blue Gray*), later known as (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* with either (NZ) *Sky Grey* or (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue under* surfaces. Some Whenuapai-based aircraft had a disruptive camouflage pattern along the same lines as that used on many Hudsons; (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Dark Slate Grey* with (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue*

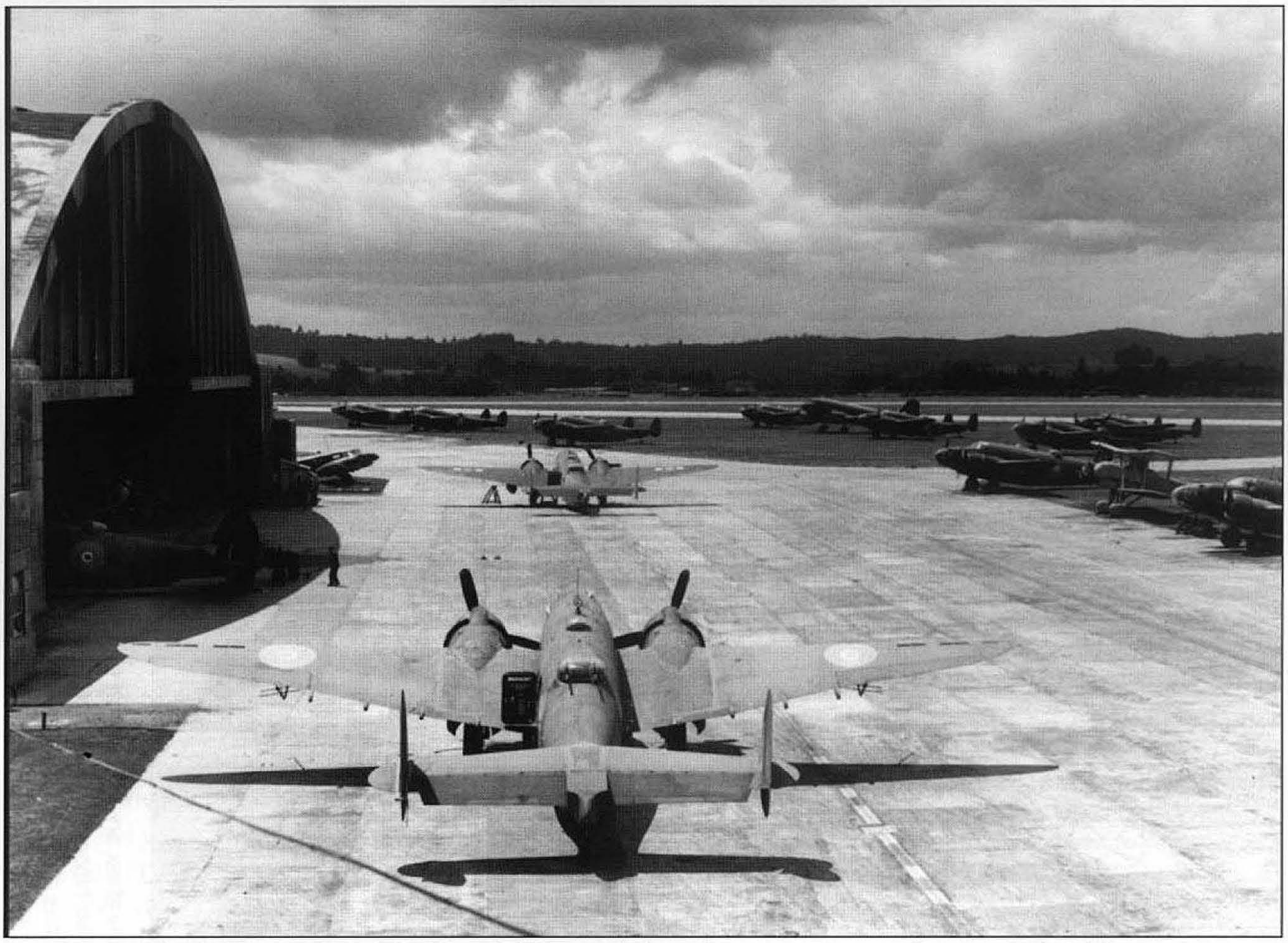
Whenuapai-based Ventura NZ4624 'OP-F' of No.11 SU. This aircraft wears a locally-applied (NZ) Blue Sea Grey and Sky Grey scheme, with Black code letters and Yellow 'last two' on the tail. Note that the use of orthochromatic film makes the Yellow numerals and outer ring of the fuselage roundel appear unusually dark, with the blue areas artificially light. Other recorded RB-34 codes are: NZ4583 'OP-K', NZ4602 'OP-0' and NZ4603 'OP-A'. (J. Regan)



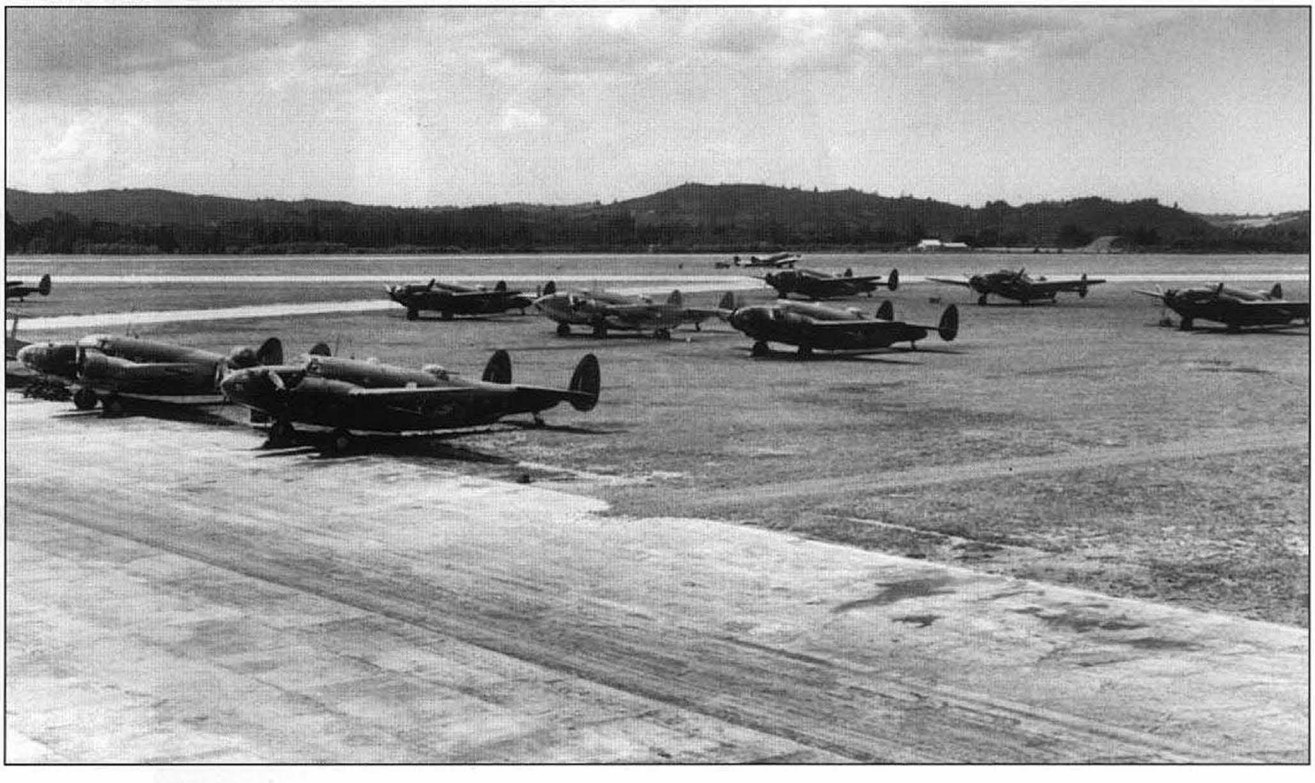
Ventura NZ4539 'ZX-A' of No.1 Operational Training Unit belly landed at Ohakea on 29 May 1944. It wears the three-tone scheme in which it was delivered and has black 3ft high code letters with yellow outlines. (J. Regan)

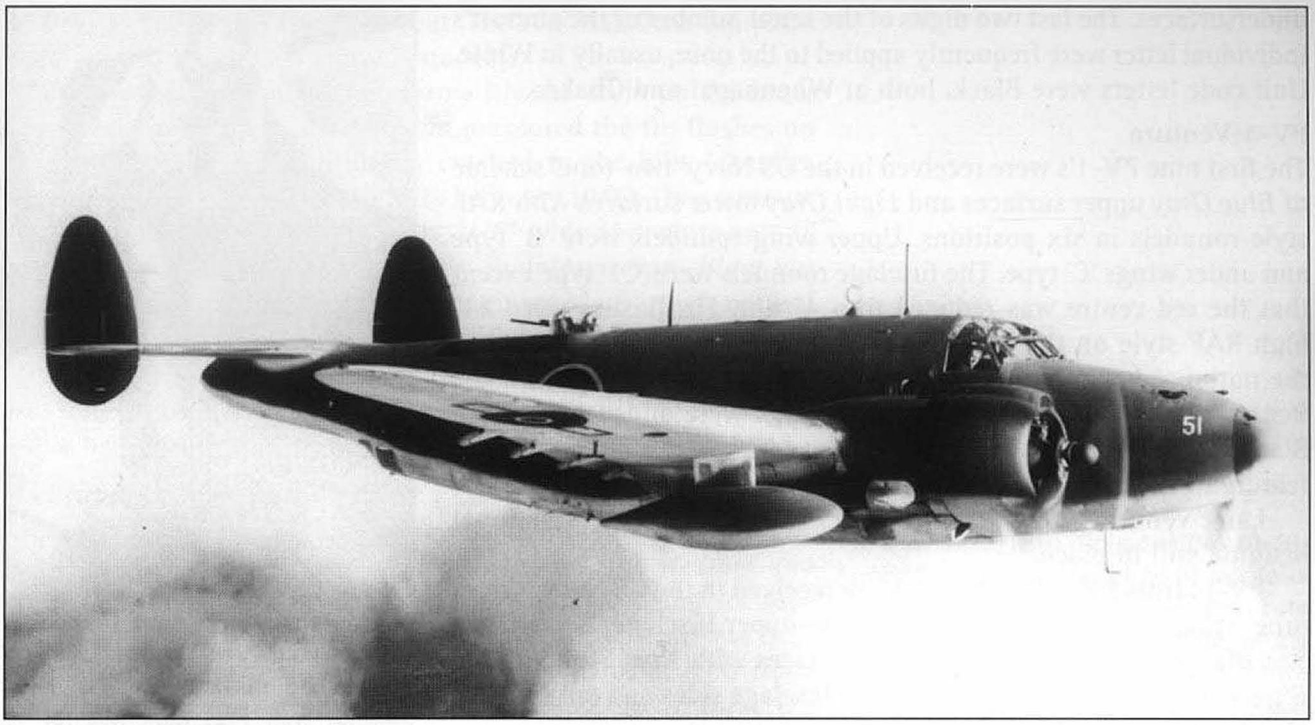


Ventura NZ4542 'ZX-E' with Mickey Mouse on its rear fuselage. The cartoon is basically black and white, with red trousers, lemon-yellow buttons and orange feet. Code letters are black, outlined in yellow, with three bombs (white or yellow) beside the 'E' on the nose. Nose-cone is probably *Blue Gray*, or possibly *Intermediate Blue.* Blue in roundels and fin flash match US *Insignia Blue,* rather than the lighter (NZ) *Matt Blue.* NZ4539 'ZX-A' has a Donald Duck cartoon. His beak and feet are orange and the cap and tunic mid-blue with white buttons. He was sometimes painted with a red bow-tie, but not in this case. (RNZAF via Robert E. Montgomery collection)

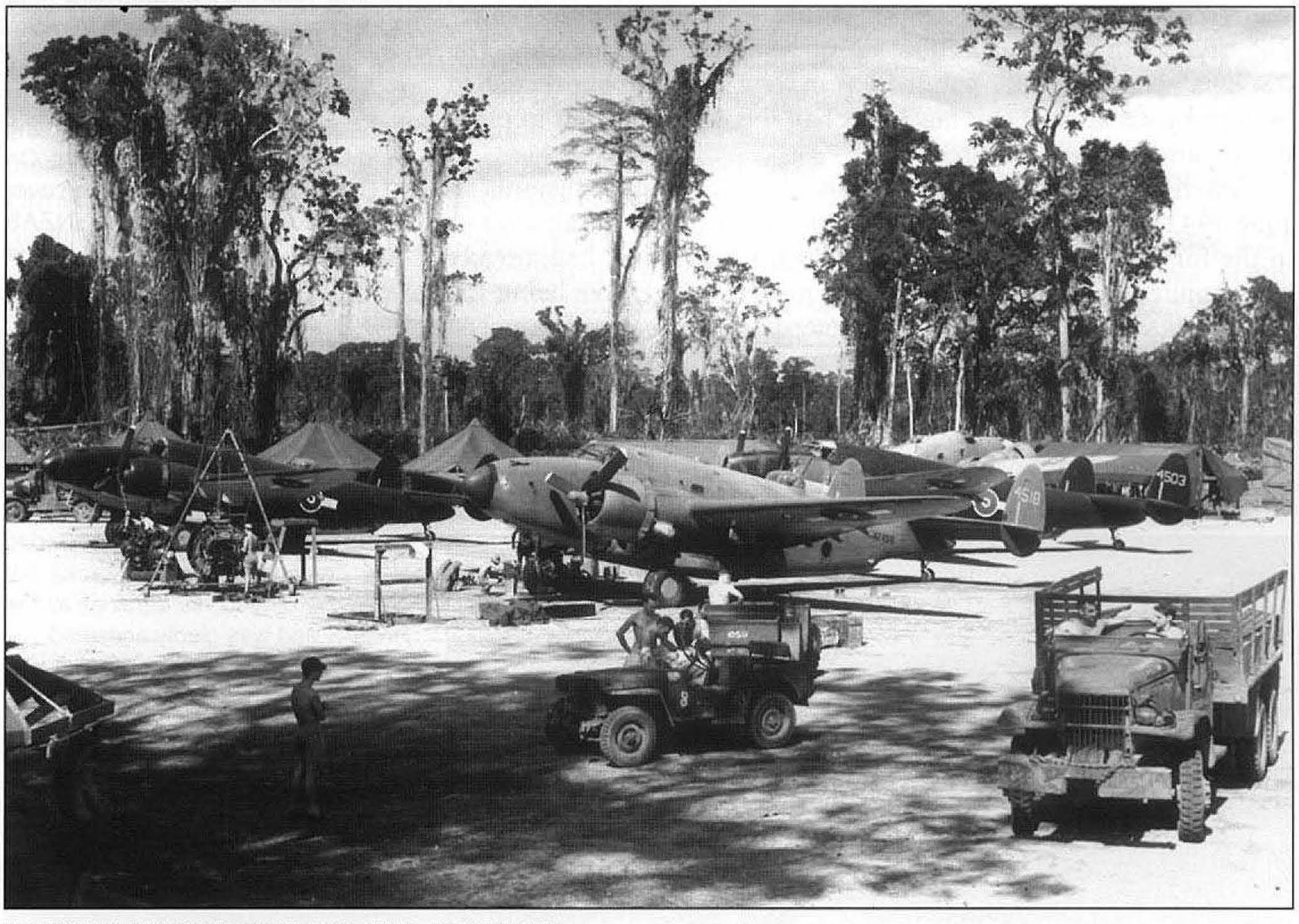


Two photos which create an impressive panoramic view of the Whenuapai Tarmac, Auckland, mid-1944. A collection of PV-1s, RB-34s, Hudsons, a C-47, an Oxford and a Vincent looking rather incongruous sitting beside the modern 'twins'. The RB-34 nearest, below is NZ4591 '91'. On the original print the upper surface tones of (NZ) *Blue Sea Gray* and (NZ) *Dark Slate Grey* are discernable on the RB-34s. Wing-mounted Yagi antennae on the RB-34s is noteworthy as these were often censored off prints released during the war. (RNZAF via Robert E. Montgomery collection)





NZ4551 of 14 SU in the RNZAF repaint scheme of (NZ) *Sea Blue Grey* and (NZ) *Sky Grey* June/July 1944. (J. Regan)



No.10 Servicing Units work area, Piva, Bougainville.

Note that NZ4573 and NZ4503 appear to have a field-applied repaint scheme of *Non-Specular Sea Blue* upper surfaces and light grey lower surfaces. Ventura NZ4518 in the centre, has the common (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Sky Grey* scheme. It was later returned to New Zealand where it suffered an air-to-air collision with C-47 NZ3501 on 21 March 1945, 3km southwest of Wainui, Kaukapakapa, Auckland. The pilot, F/Lt J. Farnsworth stayed with the Ventura while his crew baled out to safety. Farnsworth was killed in the crash. (RNZAF via P. Mossong) undersurfaces. The last two digits of the serial number or the aircraft's individual letter were frequently applied to the nose, usually in White. Unit code letters were Black, both at Whenuapai and Ohakea.

PV-1 Ventura

The first nine PV-1's were received in the US Navy 'two-tone' scheme of *Blue Gray* upper surfaces and *Light Gray* lower surfaces with RAF style roundels in six positions. Upper wing roundels were 'B' type and under wings 'C' type. The fuselage roundels were 'C1' type except that the red centre was reduced to a 4" dot. Fin flashes were 24" high RAF style on the outer fin surfaces only. The colours used in the national insignia on these aircraft were of US origin, with the Red a deep dull brick-red. These markings were added in Hawaii. Black rubber de-icer boots on all leading edges were a distinguishing feature of these early arrivals.

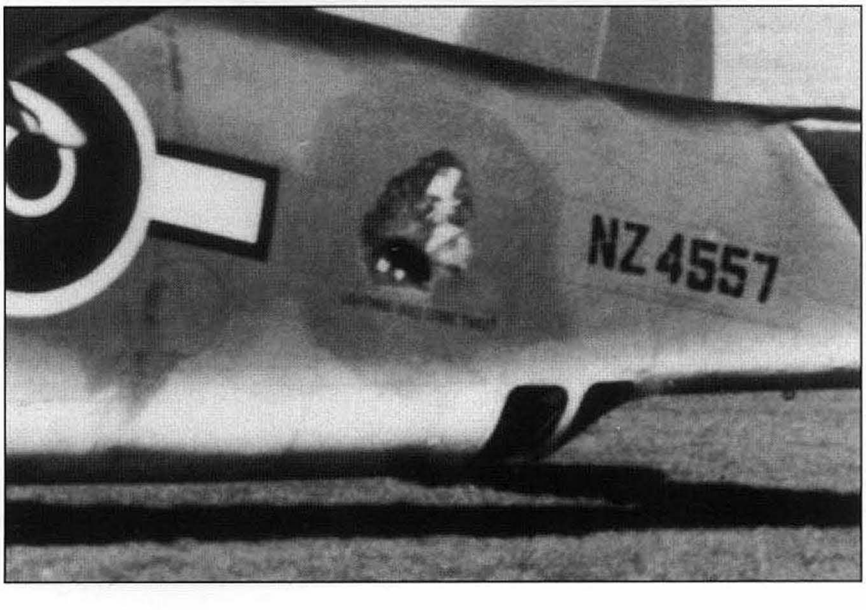
Later Venturas were flown to New Zealand with the US National Insignia still in place.

PV-1s from NZ4510 onwards were received in the US Navy 'three-tone' scheme of *Non-Specular Sea Blue* upper fuselage, *Semi-Gloss Sea Blue* wing and tailplane upper surfaces with *Non-Specular Sea Blue* leading edges, *Intermediate Blue* fuselage sides and tail surfaces and *Non-Specular Insignia White* lower surfaces.

RNZAF roundels in (NZ) *Matt Blue* were applied in six positions centred over the US Navy markings and were of the Blue-White-Blue style with a narrow Yellow surround on the fuselage only. The US 'bars' were generally painted out in New Zealand, but reapplied in operational areas. Later machines had the white bars left in place for the aircraft's entire career.

American forces added white bars to their national insignia in June 1943 and the RNZAF gazetted this modification for all aircraft in the forward area on 9 December 1943, though they had already been applied to some Kittyhawks - a powerful incentive being the threat from supposedly friendly but trigger-happy anti-aircraft gunners! From that time, bars also appeared on many New Zealand-based aircraft. Propeller spinners on the first nine PV-1s were (matt) *Instrument Black*, those on subsequent machines were *Intermediate Blue*. In the course of servicing however, many were repainted Black or cleaned back to natural metal. Propeller blades were *Instrument Black*, with

Air Marshal Sir Robert Clark-Hall alighting from a Ventura after observing a bombing raid to Kavieng, New Ireland, with F/Lt Max Milliner (a veteran of four operational tours) and his crew. Note the miniature alloy-tube ladder - one came with each Ventura. The date was June 1945 on the day Air Marshal Clark-Hall turned 62. At that time he was the oldest serving Field Officer in the British Empire. On 10 October Clark-Hall had taken over Command of the seven RNZAF Squadrons then operational in the Pacific, known as No.1 (Island) Group. Originally from England, Clark-Hall had served in the Royal Navy as a midshipman in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and learned to fly in 1911 with Pilot Certificate No.127. He served with distinction as a naval aviator in World War I and after retiring in 1934 he and his family emigrated to New Zealand. When War broke out again, he offered his services to the RNZAF, and was gladly accepted.
(P. Clark-Hall)



A detail picture of NZ4557 showing its 'Gremlin-in-hole' cartoon with a caption which reads: ANYTHING GOES STRIKE TWO !
(RNZAF via P. Mossong)

4" *Orange Yellow* tips front and rear. The oval Hamilton Standard decal was to be seen in many instances.

Fin flashes were now the narrow RNZAF style on the inner and outer fin surfaces. John Regan measured the fin flashes on Ventura NZ4573 which still lies crashed in the hills 50 miles north of Wellington (it crashed on 28 February 1946). They measure 151/2" high, red and blue parts are 21/8" wide and white part 1" wide. Prop spinners were originally in *Intermediate Blue*, but during their service life were soon repainted black or left natural metal. Propeller blades were Black with Yellow tips.

The RNZAF order to replace roundel red centres with blue was dated June 1943 and the decision to leave US-style bars on while based in New Zealand, was gazetted in December, 1943.

REPAINT SCHEMES

Most PV-1's were repainted in New Zealand between tours due to the harsh climate in the Solomon Islands - the weather and coral dust being a very abrasive combination. Using locally-manufactured paints, the predominant repaint scheme was (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* upper surfaces with (NZ) *Sky Grey* or (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue* lower surfaces. It is probable that (NZ) *Extra Dark Sea Grey*, was used in some repaints. In the forward areas, repaints and touch-ups were done with such paints as were readily available, mainly from US Navy stocks.

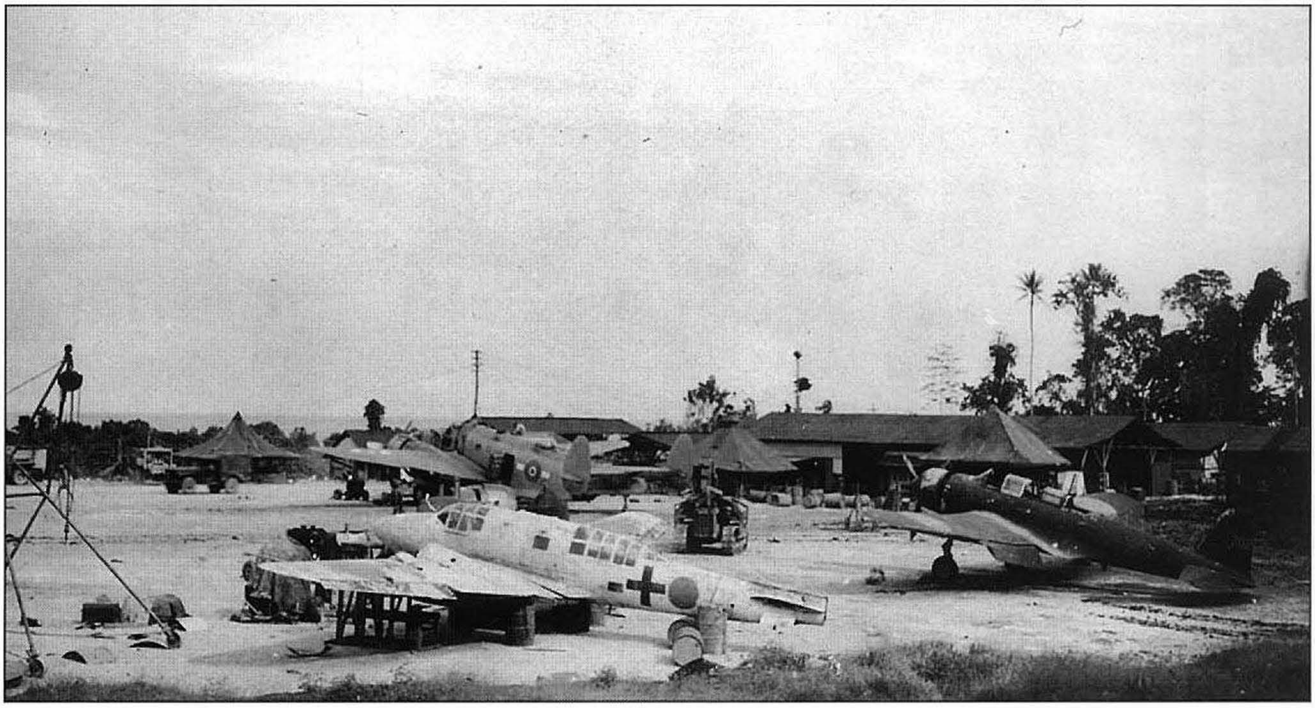
Most of the repaints for NZ-based Venturas were carried out at No.1 Repair Depot, Rukuhia, Hamilton, by specialist Women's Auxiliary Air Force painters who, in addition to wearing protective masks and clothing, were given a special diet. This included extra milk-based drinks and was supposed to help guard against harmful paint fumes.

Warrant Officer Charlie Calcinai, known throughout the RNZAF as 'Pop' recalled the undersurfaces of many Ohakea-based PV-1s being repainted (NZ) *Duck Egg Blue*, with RB-34s and Hudsons often having (NZ) *Sky Grey* lower surfaces. 'Dinny' Mygind recalls

A view of 2 (BR) Squadron/No.10 SU workshop tents and buildings at Jacquinot Bay, October 1945. The Venturas were generally lined up on both sides of the runway to the left of this picture. There were also revetments back from this end of the runway formed from bulldozed earth when the airstrip was built.

'Dinny' Mygind observed the Jake, Zekes, Dinah and Kate landing at Jacquinot Bay in September 1945. He found a large pair of Japanese binoculars sitting in the cockpit of the Kate and regrets not souveniring them at the time – someone else certainly did!

The Dinah damaged its tail landing and it has had it removed in this photo. Interestingly Mygind noted that the Mitsubishi name appeared, in English, on the Dinah's manufacturers plate. ('Glassy' Gray via B.A.Mygind)



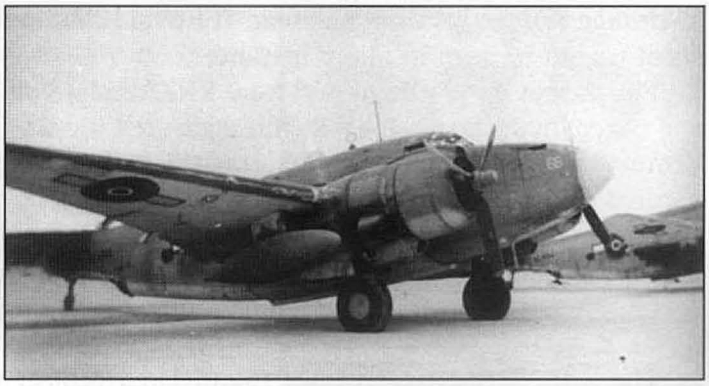
seeing PV-1s repainted at Rukuhia in 1944 with a blue-grey, lighter than US Navy *Sea Blue*, with (NZ) *Sky Grey* lower surfaces - availability seems the key factor!

The following appeared in a Memo to the Air Department.

'Department from RNZAF Station Ohakea, dated 29 December 1943, regarding the advantages of adopting a uniform colour scheme for aircraft repainting: At the present time some of the Kittyhawks on this Station have American identification markings and the diagonal white stripes, others have the standard blue/green camouflage. The Venturas operated by the B.O.T.U. [Bomber OTU] are painted on the under surface with duck-egg blue with [Blue Sea Grey] elsewhere. The Hudson aircraft have the standard blue/green camouflage, and the drogue machines [eg Harvard tow planes] are painted yellow. The PV-1's nose-cone was moulded Plexiglas, over which fabric was doped, given a Black coating, and then painted to match the aircraft's camouflage. On the original nine aircraft, the nose-cone was painted *Blue Gray* and *Light Gray.* Painted separately, the demarcation did not always line up with that on the aircraft itself. Aircraft delivered in the 'three-tone' scheme had the entire nose-cone painted *Intermediate Blue.*

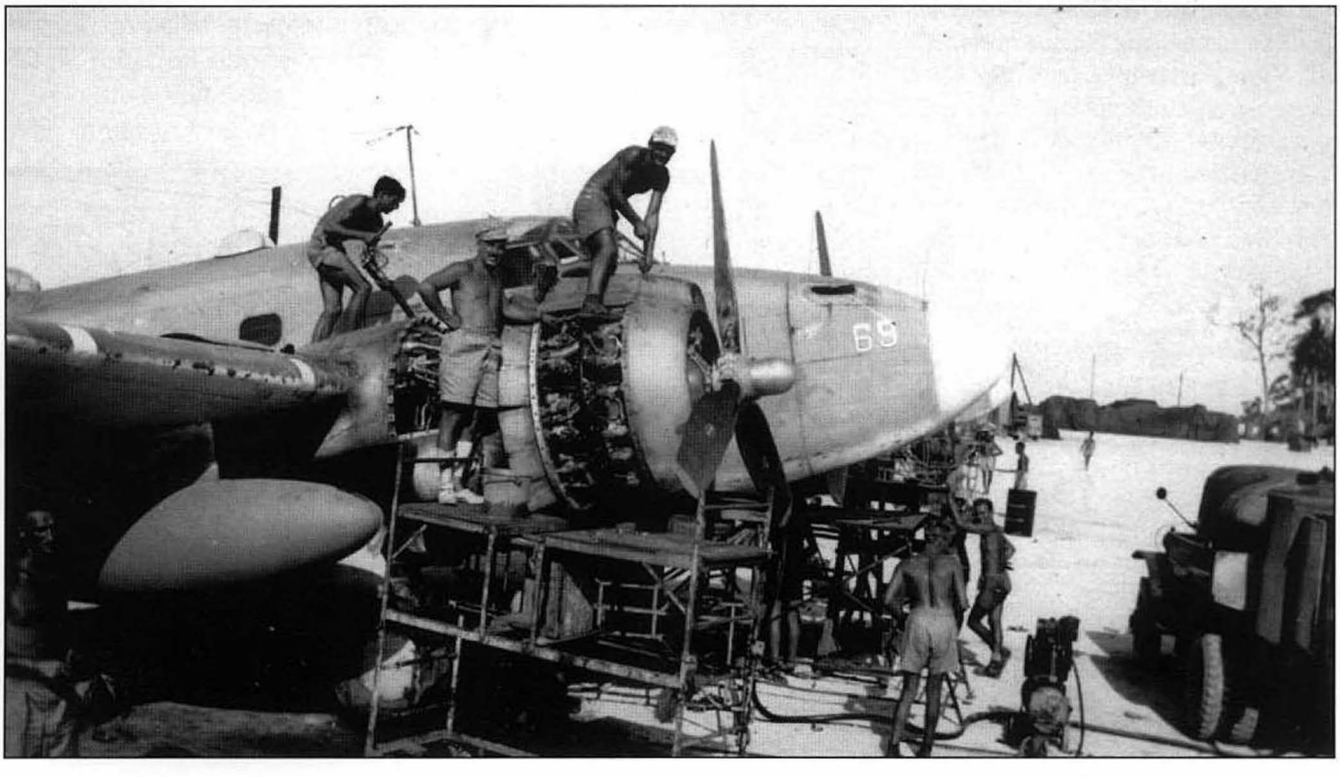
In tropical areas problems with the nose-cone Plexiglass softening and collapsing at high speed resulted in the following memo, dated 13 May 1944 from No.1 (Islands) Group to the Ventura Servicing Units:

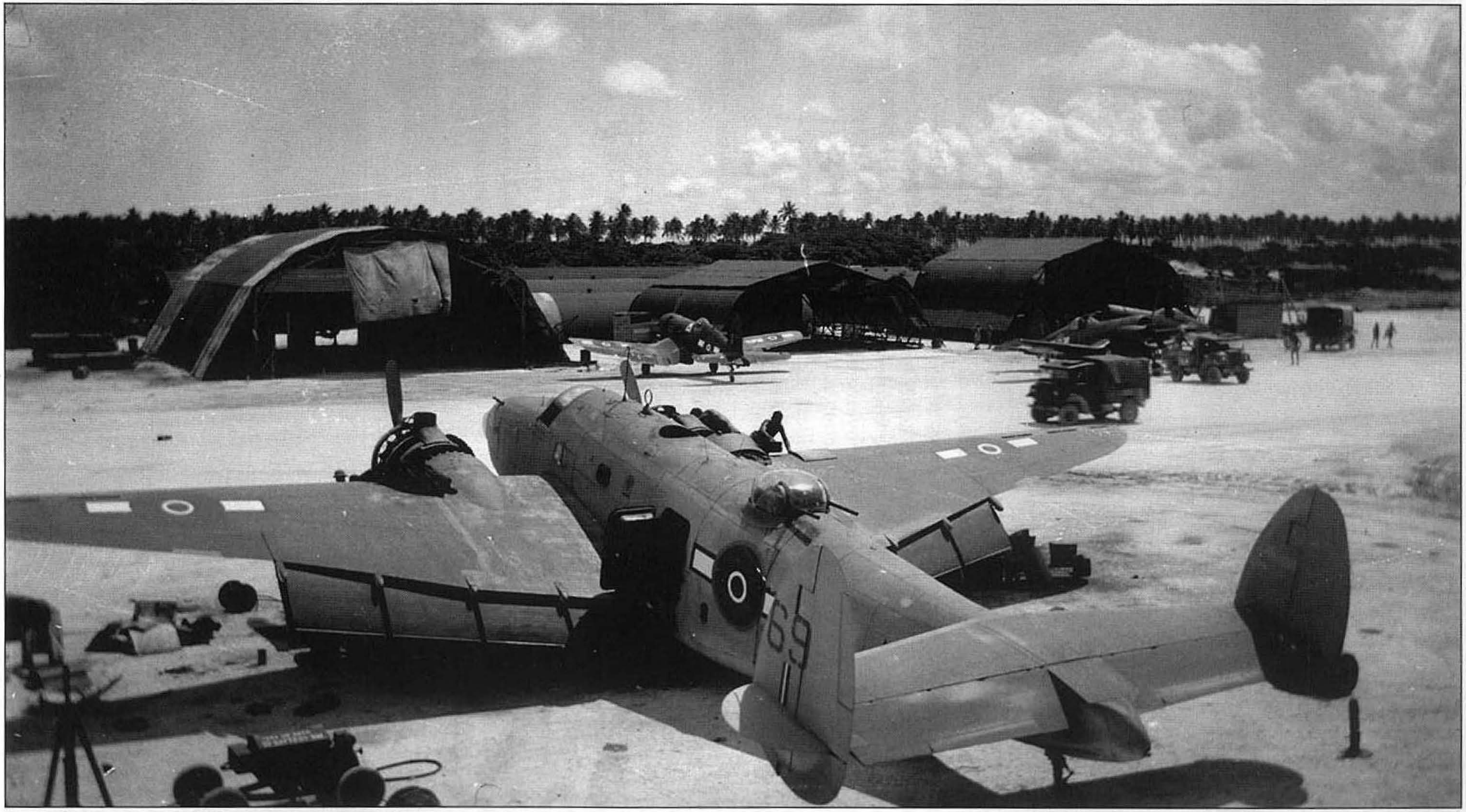
'In order to reduce heat absorbtion in an endeavour to prevent softening of the plexiglass nose on subject aircraft in the sun, PV-1 BuAer Bulletin No.42 of 31st. March has been issued instructing units to apply two coats of non-Specular *Insignia White* to the nose over the present blue grey finish ... Units are to paint the noses of all PV-1



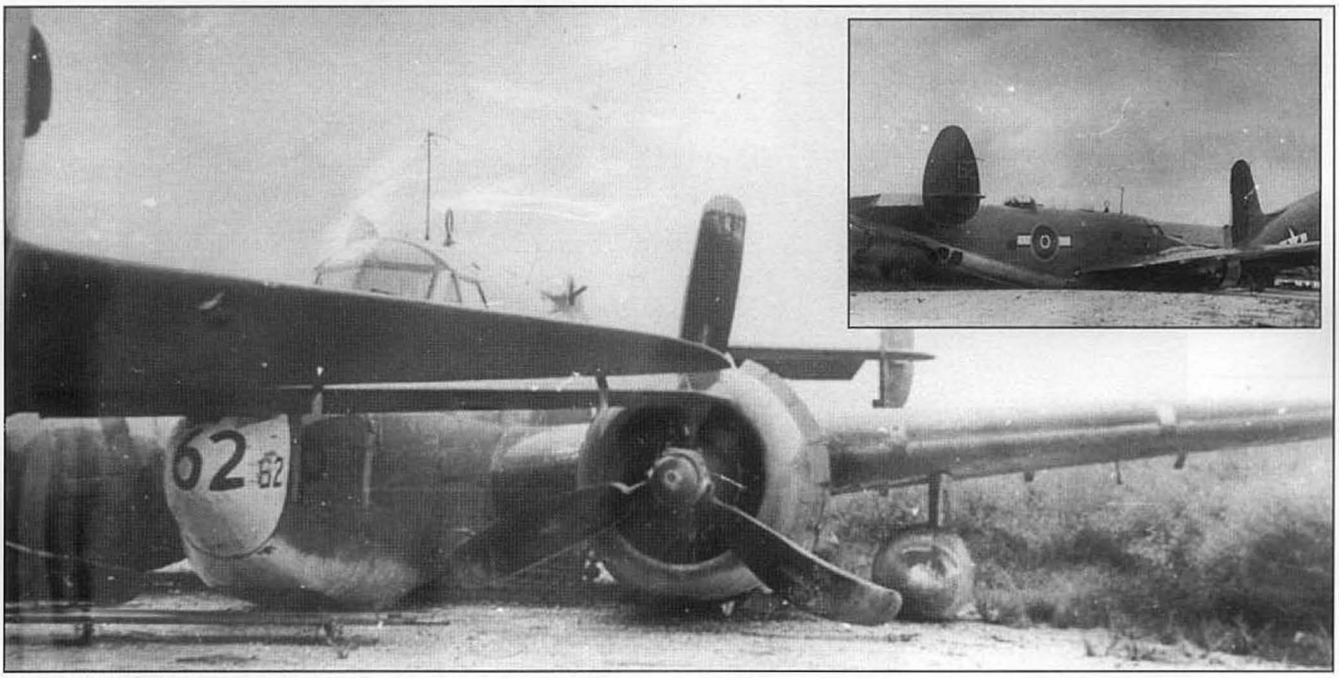
Ventura NZ4568 'somewhere in the Pacific'. Note the toned down bars of the underwing markings. This aircraft was eventually broken up at the Rukuhia dumping ground in 1948. (J. Regan)

A close view of PV-1 Ventura NZ4569 being serviced. Alex Black is probably the man uppermost on the engine nacelle. (B.A.Mygind)





PV-1 Ventura NZ4569 being serviced by 14 SU personnel on Green Island. RNZAF fighters shared this late war base and some Corsairs can be seen in the background. (B.A.Mygind)



Ventura NZ4562 after a landing accident at Guadalcanal. Note the hand painted number '62's on the repainted white Plexiglass nose cone. (J. Regan)

aircraft at the first opportunity with two coats of *Glossy Insignia White* lacquer, special AN-TT-L-51 as this gives better heat reflection than a matt white finish. Will you please advise this Headquarters in due course of the effectiveness of this method of overcoming softening of the nose plexiglass.'

FUSELAGE CARTOONS

Except for No.1 Squadron's first tour, all Venturas were 'owned' by the Servicing Units, and issued to squadrons in the war-zone as needed. This was one factor leading to nose-art only being common, in the war-zone, on No.1's aircraft, and only during their first tour.

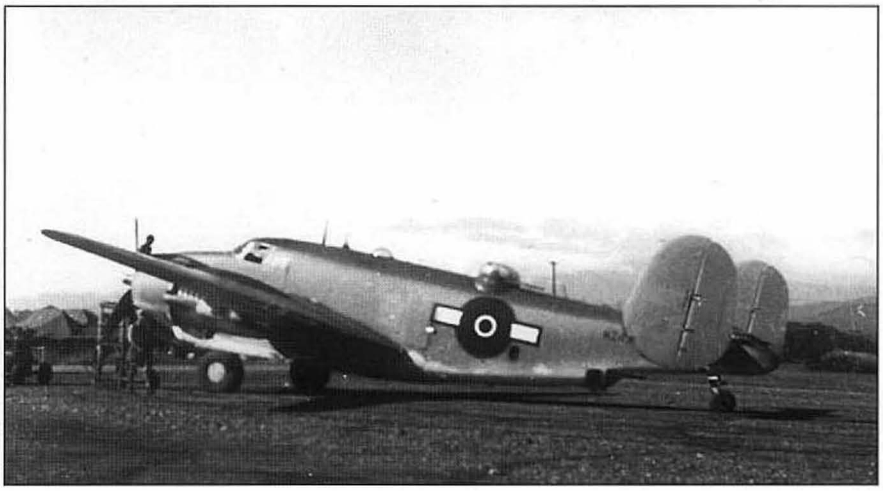
Most PV-1s were delivered from Lockheed Vega with Disney cartoons on the fuselage sides. Since many portrayed anti -Japanese sentiment, they were over-painted before the aircraft entered combat. The fear was that if a crew were shot down and captured, the cartoons would not enhance their treatment at the hands of the Japanese! Pictures taken at the time often have large patches of fresh paint where the cartoons have been over-painted.

PV-2 HARPOON

The final chapter in the New Zealand Ventura story is the RNZAFs brief encounter with the Lockheed PV-2 Harpoon.

The Harpoon was an entirely redesigned airframe with only outward resemblance to the Ventura and was intended to replace it on the production lines. The RNZAF was to receive twelve per month when this change was made. However, with the evolving war situation in the second half of 1944, the RNZAF realized that bomber-reconnaissance aircraft were not required as much as fighter-bombers. Therefore the decision was made to limit use

PV-2 Harpoon NZ4702 on a one day rest and refuelling stop, Guadalcanal, about 11 May 1945. This was on its return flight to Hawaii after the RNZAF had decided not re-equip with Harpoons. (J. M. McCready)

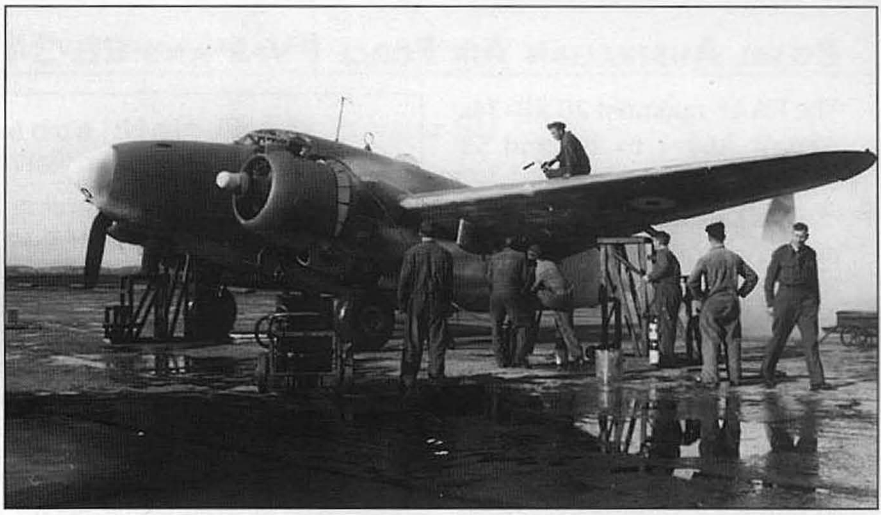


of the Harpoon and only acquire 47. The RNZAF set aside the serial block NZ4701-47 for the Harpoons and anticipated delivered between January and 30 June 1945.

As things eventuated only four were ever delivered. The first New Zealander to fly a Harpoon was Squadron Leader T.J. McLean de Lange, who visited the Lockheed Vega factory at Burbank California to test fly a US Navy Harpoonon 22 November, 1944.

In January 1945 a full aircrew arrived at N.A.S. Beaufort, South Carolina and on 9 February began their conversion course to Harpoons. On the 10th the RNZAF Ferry Unit in Hawaii accepted the first of four new Harpoons to ferry down to Whenuapai air base, New Zealand. They were allocated the serial numbers NZ4701-4 and eventually NZ4701-3 left for New Zealand on 17 March. One of the crews returned to Hawaii and flew NZ4704 home too, arriving on 13 April 1945.

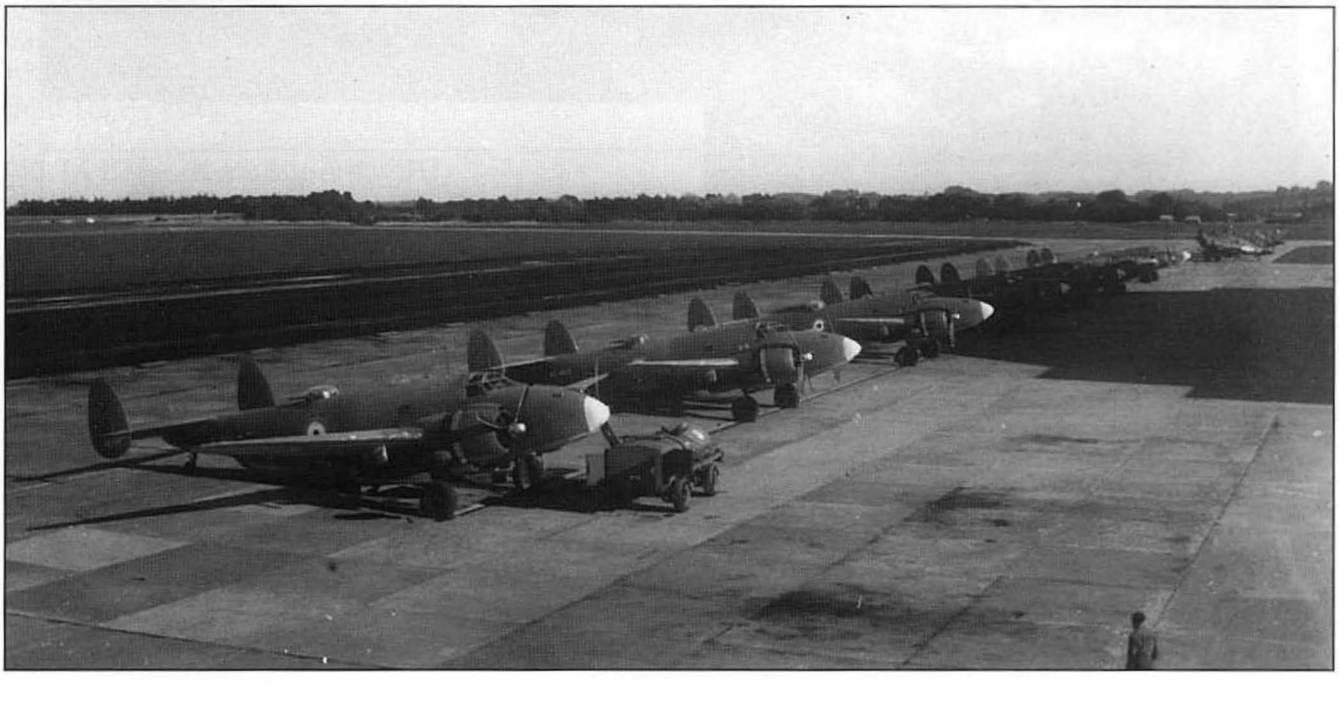
During the PV-2s short stay at Whenuapai, LAC B. A. Mygind was among the ground crew assigned to give the Harpoons daily inspections. However, they were forbidden to go inside their charges! The result was rather cosmetic inspections. The four Harpoons were then passed to No.1 ARU at Rukuhia for evaluation. At the same time the bureaucrats and policy makers decided that with the war situation having improved so much converting any PV-1 squadrons to PV-2s was wasted effort. So, on 16 April the same crew flew NZ4704 back to Hawaii. The other three left New Zealand, crewed by 41 Transport Sqn members, for the return ferry journey on 24 April 1945 and all four had all been returned to the Americans in Hawaii by mid-May, thereby ending the RNZAFs brief involvement with the PV-2 Harpoon.



In 1946 the surviving PV-1s were temporarily put into storage at RNZAF Ohakea before being broken-up there, or flown to Rukuhia, from where they were sold for scrap. Here a running engine on NZ4610 is being flooded with oil as a corrosion inhibitor. The engines were simply run till they stalled on the oil. Note the small black '10' under the nose.

'Dinny' Mygind is under the wing holding a fire extinguisher. (B.A. Mygind)

A line-up of Venturas used for training, prior to mothballing at Ohakea, 1946. Note the RNZAF post war (NZ) *Matt Blue,* (NZ) *Matt White* and (NZ) *Matt Red* roundels, with (NZ) *Matt Yellow* rings on the fuselage roundels. The nearest aircraft is NZ4574 and second is NZ4610. All wear the RNZAF repaint scheme of (NZ) *Blue Sea Grey* and (NZ) *Sky Grey,* except for the second-to-last, with an original US Navy 'three-tone' scheme. (B.A. Mygind)

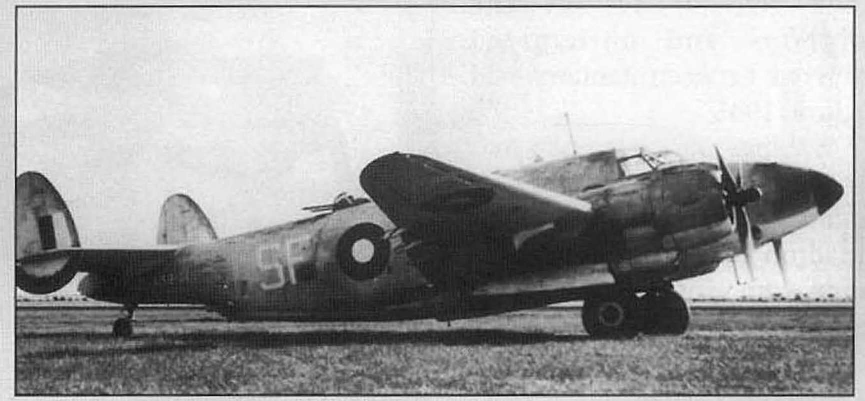


ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE PV-1 AND RB-34 VENTURAS

The RAAF operated 20 RB-34s (serials A59-1 to 20) and 55 PV-1s (A59-50 to 104).

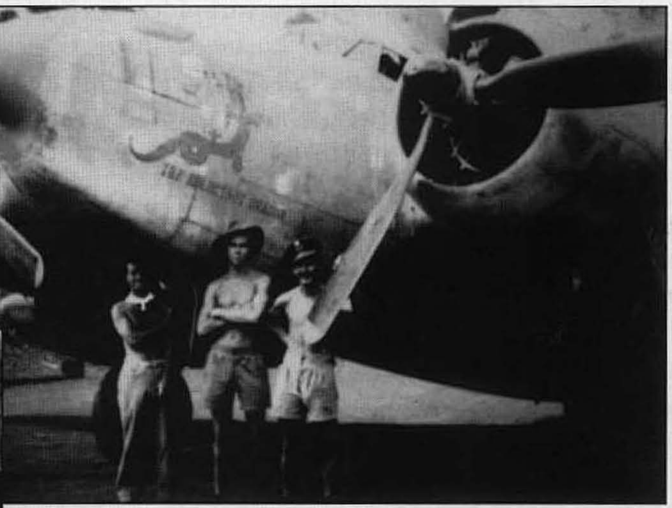
No.13 Squadron was the only Australian unit in the Pacific to operate the Ventura. It was formed in June 1940 and operated Ansons, Hudsons and then a mixed bag of Beauforts and Venturas. By May 1944, the squadron had moved to Cooktown and in August 1944, now solely equipped with RB-34s and PV-1s, it moved to Gove in the Northern Territory with an anti-submarine patrol and strike mission around what is now the southern parts Indonesia and East Timor.

In August 1945, the squadron moved to Morotai and Labuan and from Labuan undertook patrols and leaflet drops. With the end of the war, the Venturas were refitted for temporary transport duties and used to repatriate Australian servicemen and POWs.*



PV-1 A59-61 of 13 Squadron, August 1945. It still wears a standard US Navy 'three-tone', scheme with yellow code letters, (most of No.13s Ventura had white codes, often outlined in black). The serial is very light grey. Note the black nose cone and the lack of fin-flashes on inner tail surfaces.

Known 13 Squadron codes included A59-56 'SF-T', A59-59 'SF-P', A59-75 'SF-Q' and A59-81 SF-D (named 'Whiff-Oh'). An ex-RCAF PV-1, registered VH-SFF, is owned by the Royal Australian Air Force Museum, and maintained in airworthy condition in military configuration as A59-67 SF-F 'Whiff-Oh'. (RAAF)



Three pictures of PV-1 Ventura 'SF-R' (probably A59-75) operated by 13 squadron from Gove in 1944 and named *The Reluctant Dragon*. Note the reversed fin flashes, which only appear on the outside faces of the fins. (S. Mackenzie)

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* The Lockheed File

Appendix 1. RNZAF Ventura Servicing Units

No.10 Bomber Maintenance Unit (subsequently redesignated Servicing Unit)

Formed 1/9/1943 at Whenuapai from ground staff of No.1 BR Sqn, shipped to Guadalcanal 5-13/10/1943, also Det Flt at Munda (New Georgia) from 28/11/1943. From 28/11/1944 all daily inspections done at Munda, only periodical inspections at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. Moved to Piva Bomber Strip, Bougainville late-April 1944. Moved to Emirau 10/1944, to Los Negros July-August 1945. Disbanded Los Negros 15/9/1945. Aircraft: PV-1s.

No.11 BMU (subsequently No.11 SU)

Formed (presumably) 1/9/1943 at Ohakea from ground staff of No.2 BR Sqn, remained there after departure of the Sqn. To Gisborne May-June 1944, during July-Sept 1944 all personnel absorbed by Whenuapai Maintenance Wing. Aircraft: PV-1/RB-34.

No.12 BMU (subsequently SU)

Formed 20/8/1943 at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal from ground staff of No.3 BR Sqn. Between 22/10 and 4/11/1943 transferred by air to Pallikulo, Espiritu Santo. Name changed to 12 (BR) SU 26/10/1943. Moved forward by ship to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal between 27-30/11/1943, remaining there until its disbandment 10/9/1945, though all flying had ceased by 29/6/1945. Aircraft: Hudson until January 1944, PV-1 mid-November 1943 to June 1945.

No.13 BMU (subsequently SU)

Presumed formed 1/9/1943 at Nausori, Fiji from ground staff of No.4 BR Sqn, remained there until disbandment 12/3/1945. Aircraft: Hudsons until November 1944, RB-34 (briefly) and PV-1 Ventura from August 1944 until March 1945.

No.14 BMU (subsequently SU)

Formed at Whenuapai 1/9/1943, initially to maintain the Det Flt of No.9 BR Sqn (Hudson III), from 1/11/1943 serviced the Sqn in its entirety at Whenuapai. Unit absorbed into Whenuapai Maintenance Wing July 1944. Aircraft: Hudsons, RB-34s from October 1943, PV-1s from January 1944. Hudsons and RB-34s withdrawn approx March-April 1944.

No.14 Bomber SU

Formed at Whenuapai 14/8/1944 for overseas service. Shipped to Green Island 10-20/10/1944, PV-1s arrived 29/10/1944. Shipped to Jacquinot Bay 27-29/5/1945, disbanded there 15/9/1945. Aircraft: PV-1s.

The establishment for a Bomber SU was initially 18 aircraft (12+6), but in December 1943 this was altered to 15 aircraft (10+5) to keep in line with US Navy Patrol Squadrons.

Note that 'Maintenance Units' became 'Servicing Units' during latter half of October 1943. All the earlier MUs/SUs (No.s 1-4, 10-13) were created by 'splitting' ground crews from their Squadrons. All SUs in NZ in the latter half of 1944 (by then staffed by large numbers of men graded medically unfit for overseas service) were absorbed into the Maintenance Wing of the Station on which they were based, and new SUs were raised with newly trained men for overseas service.

Major Stations (Whenuapai, Ardmore, Ohakea, Woodbourne, Wigram) had Maintenance Wings, each consisting of up to five Servicing Squadrons, usually designated by number but those at Whenuapai by letter. Squadrons flying aircraft maintained by the Whenuapai Bomber Maintenance Wing were:

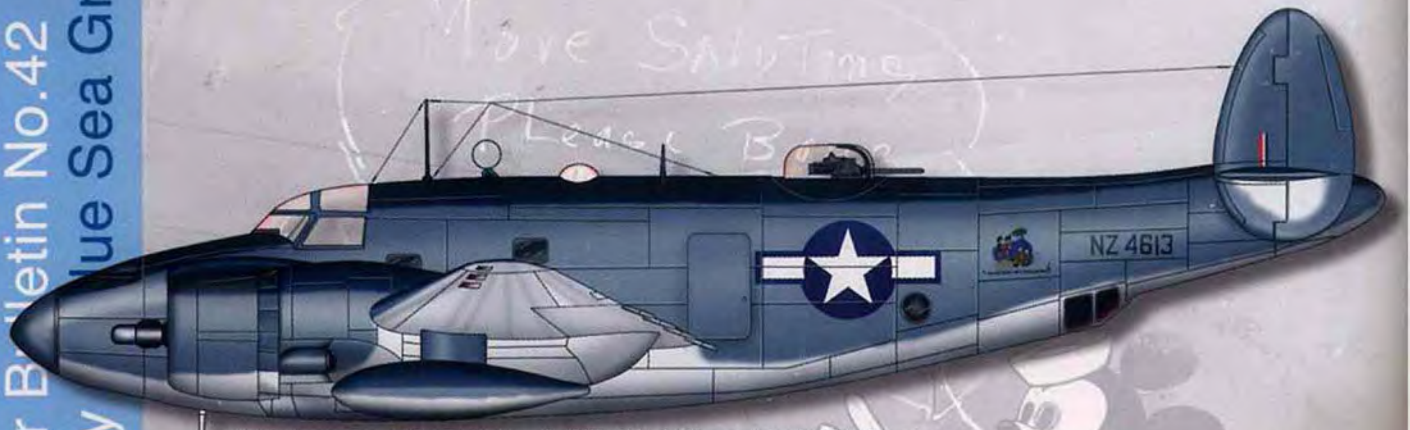
No.8 (BR) Sqn; from 1 to 29 October 1944; No.9 (BR) Sqn from 21 September 1944 to late 1 December 1944. No.3 (BR) Sqn; 2 January to 7 February 1945; 1 (BR) Sqn, from 5 February to 4 March 1945. No.4 (BR) Sqn; 12 March to early May 1945. No.2 (BR) Sqn; from 7 may to 11 June 1945.

The Servicing Units in the Bomber Maintenance Wing at Whenuapai also applied code letters to the Venturas; 'OP' for No.11 SU and 'KJ' for No.14 SU, 3rd Bomb Group   Bloody Tuesday   N.A.S. Beaufort   MacArthur   'Dinny' Mygind

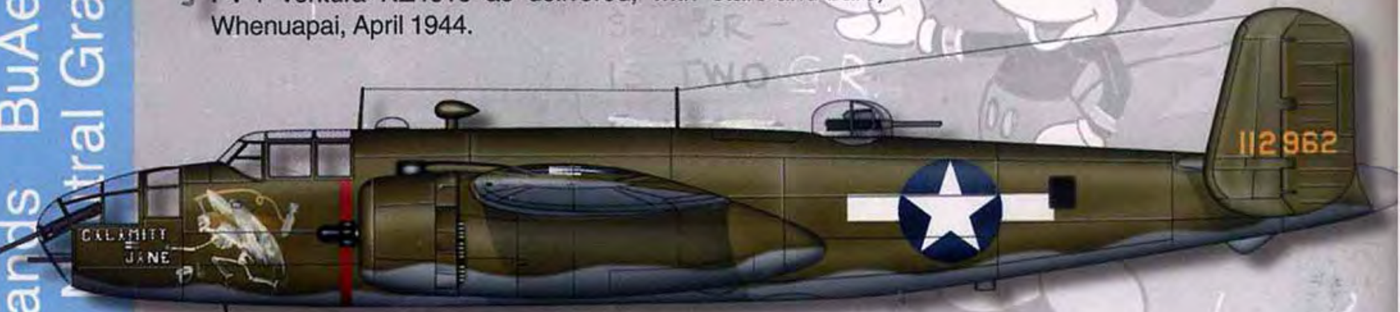
akea   B-25C   Robert E. Montgomery   US Navy Harpoon   PV-1   'El Aguila'

Matt Blue   Wh uapai   RB-34   olomon Islands   BuAer B lletin No.42

Fuselage Ca ns   Hudson   M3 Zeke   tral Gray   ue Sea Gra



PV-1 Ventura NZ4613 as delivered, with stars-and-bars, Whenuapai, April 1944.


CALAMITY JANE
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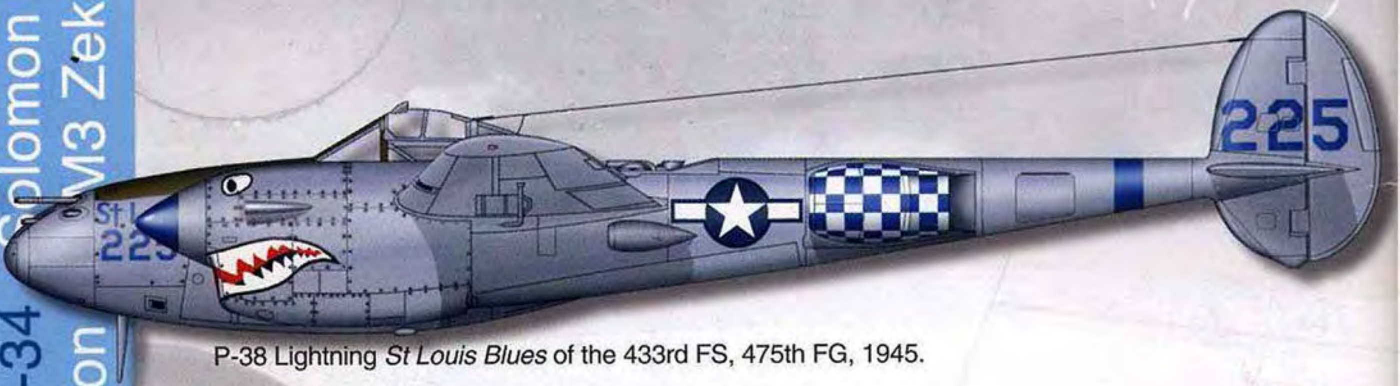
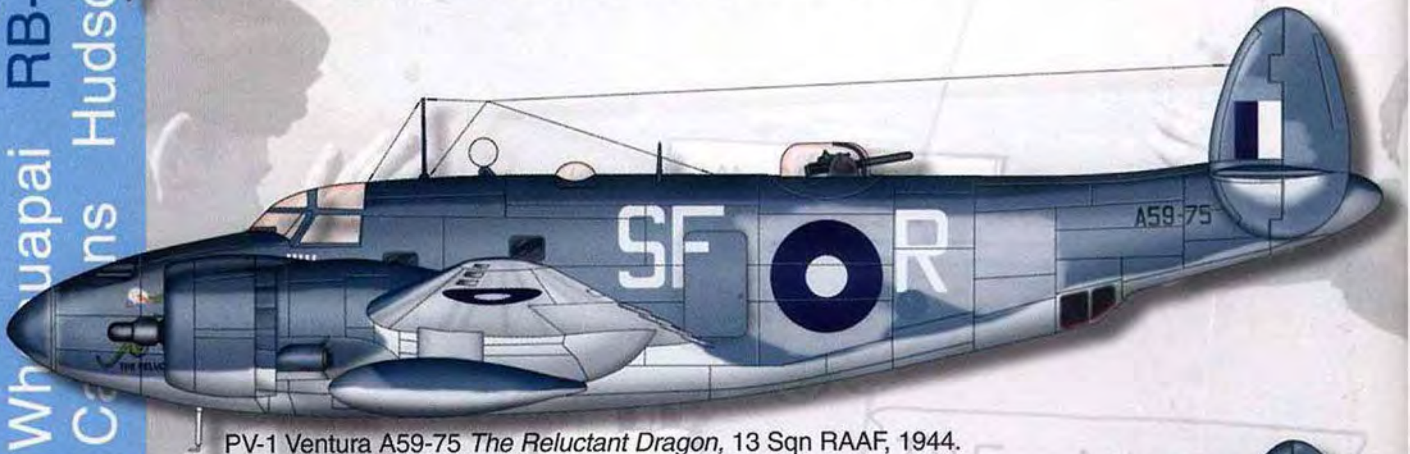
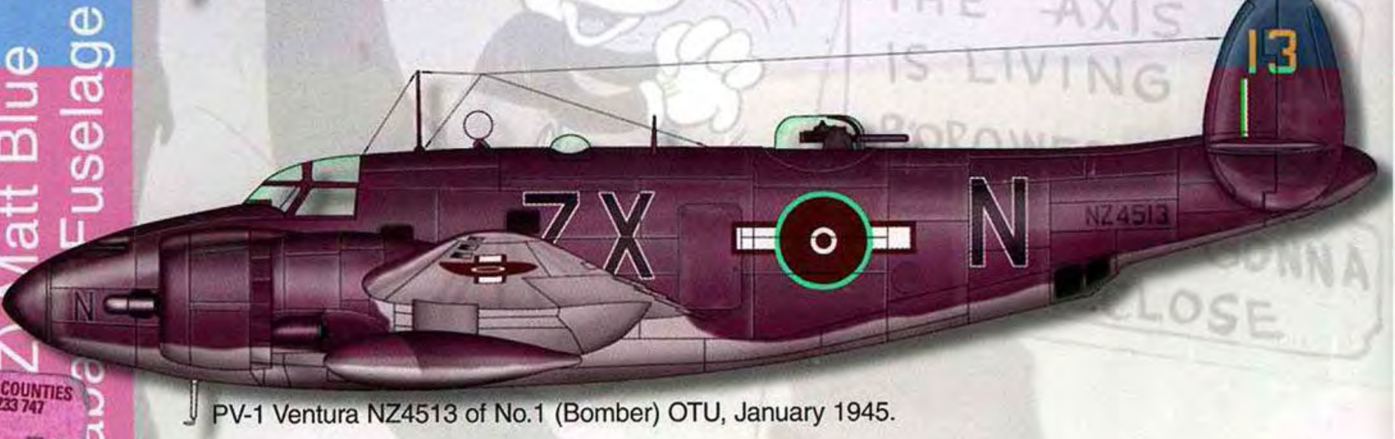
B-25 *Calamity Jane* of the 13th BS, 3rd BG.



P-38 Lightning *St Louis Blues* of the 433rd FS, 475th FG, 1945.



PV-1 Ventura A59-75 *The Reluctant Dragon,* 13 Sqn RAAF, 1944.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PV-1 Ventura NZ4513 of No.1 (Bomber) OTU, January 1945.

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